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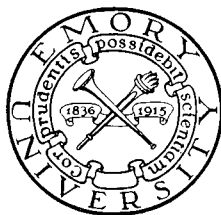
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AUTHOR OF "CHARLIE THORNHILL,"
"WHICH IS THE WINNER," "THE BEAUCLERCS," ETC., ETC.

NEW EDITION.

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CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE.
I.—OXFORD AS IT WAS - - - - -	I
II.—A SELFISH LOVE - - - - -	9
III.—PEGGY JANSEN - - - - -	20
IV.—OUR HERO, SUCH AS HE IS - - - - -	26
V.—MUST WIN A POT O' MONEY - - - - -	33
VI.—JANSEN'S HOUSEHOLD ARRANGEMENTS - - - - -	39
VII.—THE COUSINS - - - - -	45
VIII.—WHO RIDES THE ROVER - - - - -	52
IX.—THE PARTY AT THE HOLT - - - - -	57
X.—A GENTLEMAN RIDER WITHOUT A MOUNT - - - - -	64
XI.—THE RACE - - - - -	72
XII.—HOW TO PAY A DEBT OF HONOUR WITH- OUT MONEY - - - - -	80
XIII.—WHERE HAROLD GOT HIS MONEY TO PAY HIS DEBTS OF HONOUR - - - - -	86
XIV.—HAROLD'S OTHER COUSIN - - - - -	94
XV.—ECONOMY - - - - -	102
XVI.—HAROLD FALCON RECEIVES INTELLIGENCE WHEN HE LEAST EXPECTS IT - - - - -	111
XVII.—THE PRODIGAL RETURNS - - - - -	126
XVIII.—HAWKESTONE CASTLE - - - - -	135
XIX.—AFTER A LONG INTERVAL - - - - -	140
XX.—A COUNTRY-HOUSE IN SEASON - - - - -	149
XXI.—AN EARLY DAY WITH THE CUBS - - - - -	157
XXII.—EARLY MORNING IN ST. JAMES'S - - - - -	164
XXIII.—OUR RELIGIOUS EXERCISES - - - - -	173
XXIV.—THE JANSENS, MOTHER AND SON - - - - -	181
XXV.—LORD HAWKESTONE'S ROAD HOME- - - - -	188
XXVI.—LORD HAWKESTONE INCREASES HIS AC- QUAINTANCE - - - - -	194


CHAP.	PAGE.
XXVII.—EGMONT - - - - -	203
XXVIII.—A TOTAL DISREGARD OF THE UNITIES -	216
XXIX.—AFTER THE SEASON IN SCOTLAND- -	225
XXX.—A STRANGER- - - - -	231
XXXI.—A CHANGE OF QUARTERS - - -	237
XXXII.—HOW LORD HAWKESTONE KILLED THE BIG HART OF BEN FALLOCH - -	242
XXXIII.—THE SQUIRE OF EGMONT - - -	252
XXXIV.—THE ARISTOCRACY AT EGMONT - -	262
XXXV.—LORD HAWKESTONE GOES HOME - -	274
XXXVI.—HAROLD FALCON SETTLES SOME OF HIS COUSIN'S AFFAIRS - - - -	285
XXXVII.—A STUDIO - - - - -	292
XXXVIII.—RATHER IMPORTANT - - - -	300
XXXIX.—LORD FALCONBERG'S HEIR - - -	310
XL.—HAROLD'S COMMUTATION OF PUNISH- MENT - - - - -	319
XLI.—HOW HAROLD FALCON BORE HIS SEN- TENCE - - - - -	329
XLII.—A LITTLE DINNER- - - - -	334
XLIII.—THE JANSSENS AGAIN - - - -	345
XLIV.—STARTLING INTELLIGENCE - - -	352
XLV.—MINISTRY TO A MIND DISEASED - -	360
XLVI.—HAROLD AT HOME - - - -	367
XLVII.—SWEEPING OUT THE CORNERS - -	376
XLVIII.—THE LAST CORNER SWEEPED - -	384



LORD FALCONBERG'S HEIR.

CHAPTER I.

OXFORD AS IT WAS.

6 UIETA non movere.' What a picture ! what classic dignity ! what philosophic indifference to other people ! how wonderfully suggestive of the unprincipled minister of an apathetic sovereign ! Let well alone ; well, if it be well, certainly ! but how if it be bad ? be careful not to make it worse. So are we freed from the horns of a dilemma : when the dilemma is progression, which stultifies itself.

Any man who considers the conditions of our Constitution, with care and impartiality, will admit that it came to perfection about the time of Edward III. It was then well known to be the admiration of all Christendom. From that time it wanted nothing, and should have been a model to future states and generations. Occasionally a gentle tinkering was demanded for the vessel of the state, more by the know-nothings and the busy-bodies who looked on from the shore, and who claimed to be proprietors, and wiser than other people, than from those who directed the helm, and superintended the rigging, and who must have been the best judges of how far the leak was to be repaired. What is the object of change and renovation so long as battles are won and salaries are paid, and there are ragouts and pure claret for the

ten thousand, and a sufficiency of something or other for the million? What could a navvy do with a *meringue*, or a hackney-coachman with a sweetbread stewed in champagne? Little more than with a vote: exchange it for something useful.

How wonderfully the world (of course we mean England and the English) moves on, whoever may be at the helm: Henry II. or the Pope; the King or the Barons; York or Lancaster; a Charles or a Cromwell; a Protestant or a — (no! we must have an orthodox minister at the head of affairs, for we have always sacrificed even our loyalty to our religion); a Stuart or a Hanoverian; a Pitt, a Fox, a Grey, a Russell, a Peel, a Palmerston, or a Stanley. We have called out loudly once or twice since the Middle Ages, and the governing powers have obliged us, or we should have obliged them. But the action is contemptible enough; and if we are to have many more of these changes, I for one shall begin to think that England and the English are not so infallible as they have always pretended to be.

Now nothing of this sort would come amiss: neither Household Suffrage, nor Vote by Ballot, nor University Extension, nor Inquiry into International Law, if we were willing to admit that we were capable of improvement. But if we are already at the top of the tree, and if we are only bent upon benefiting our neighbours without the acquisition of any advantages from them, why should we give ourselves this trouble and fatigue? Why paint the lily, or perfume the rose? Ah! my fellow-countrymen, there's an element of mock-modesty, a vague suspicion at the bottom of you, which you are willing to satisfy; or a grand self-sufficiency even in your changes, that whatever your fate, you must be English still. There has been a fine new patch or two put into the old garment, where it has been a little rubbed by long use, or where rough hands have soiled and damaged it; and now we are strengthening the patch and extending its borders. Some think we are treading on delicate ground and may make the rent worse; but we are a sober, steady set of botchers, and the stitches will do for a long time to come. It's easier to mend the Constitution than to make a new one.

With such sentiments as these my soul had not been so sorrowful over the late changes as it might have been, but for one circumstance. The enemy has attacked our stronghold of happy prejudice, entirely upon the strength of former successes. Oxford, if not fallen, has been gradually sinking, and brazen tongues talk of terrible things. Our sister-universities, if not for all men, were meant for all time. London, Liverpool, Manchester, Suburban villages, Rotten boroughs, Ecclesiastical establishments—I write it with a steel pen softened by tears—all carry with them the elements of change. Their increase, their population, their wealth will increase, and the result is obvious even when John Bright shall be no more. But the very stones of Oxford and Cambridge cry out against it. Those caps and gowns, those princely stomachs, those high tables, bottles, common rooms, and hebdomadal boards, were never intended to crumble away with the old walls and towers, which must go unless Dr. Cumming's millennium should save them. Rich mullions, tracery, mediæval transepts, oak and stone, carry with them the elements of decay; the caterpillar and the palmer-worm, and damp and dust, and the host of destructives, only wait their time to effect an entrance. But what matter? A don's a don for a' that.

So is an undergraduate, with a difference; and undergraduates, to say truth, are not altogether what they were.

It was a lovely morning in the winter of 1841, soft, mild, and genial, when a rather sickly sun poured as much of its beams as could find its way through the trees of the garden and over the wall into the quadrangle of T—— College, Oxford. It was still early morning, and there was peace and quiet among the old walls. The flagstones were damp with the mists of the past night, and but few footsteps had as yet disturbed their repose. At this moment, however, from the various little doors which opened upon the pavement came hurriedly down the creaking old staircases some thirty or forty young men, in academicals. By far the greater number were dressed in the scant black stuff gown (if it may be so far dignified) and the trencher cap of the commoner of the university. Half-a-dozen scholars of the college wore

surplices, and one remarkably handsome young man made his way to the chapel-door in the full black silk robes and golden-tasselled cap of a nobleman. Mr. Trenchard, the dean, slipped noiselessly in, touching his cap in return to the morning salutation of the men; and in another five minutes the porter had closed the doors of the chapel, and had excluded the idle and unpunctual.

In another part of the same college, while this scene was enacting, a young man was lying at full length on a small iron bedstead. He seemed to have just awoke from a heavy sleep, and his scout was pouring cold water into a primitive-looking tub, now so much the fashion in Paris, and the substitute for our modern bath. Certain indications of the previous evening's amusement were present to casual observation. Two packs of cards were on the drawers, a dice-box and one die lay beside them; and mixed up in confusion with a watch and chain, two or three rings, a bunch of keys, and a cigar case, were two or three Bank of England notes crumpled up carelessly, six or eight sovereigns, and a heap of silver, the greatest part of which consisted of half-crowns. Lying on the floor was a pair of trowsers, of some dark colour, attached by straps to Wellington boots, denoting the impatience with which the wearer had drawn them off the preceding evening—to speak more correctly, at an early hour of the present day. In one part of the room, over the back of a chair, lay a black dress-coat and waistcoat—the signs of a demi-toilette—and in another a shirt still decorated with three convolvulus leaves of gold and amethyst, attached to each other by small chains. Such was the fashion of the day. The whole room was suggestive of anything but monastic asceticism.

‘What’s the time, Weller?’

‘The gentlemen’s just gone into chapel, Sir. The bell rung down as I come in, Sir.’ And Weller began collecting his master’s waifs and strays, which at first seemed rather a complicated business. ‘Do you hunt this morning, Sir?’

‘No, but Mr. Trevelyan and Mr. Beauchamp are coming here to breakfast, so you must send for their commons.’

‘Yes, Sir.’ Here Mr. Falcon’s scout gave the cold

water a turn in the tub, and pitched in the sponge. 'What time would you like breakfast, Sir?'

'In half-an-hour,' said Mr. Falcon, jumping out of bed, as Mr. Weller disappeared; 'and hold hard,' added he, 'get some kidneys and a spread-eagle well devilled from Jubber's directly.'

'Yes, Sir. I'd better borrow Mr. Day's breakfast-service, hadn't I?'

'No; use your own.'

'Please, Sir, we've only got one saucer left. Mr. Hickson broke 'em all, shooting with his air-cane yesterday morning.'

'Shooting with his air-cane!' said the undergraduate with some surprise, and not quite understanding the explanation.

'Yes, Sir, he was shooting at a picture of his aunt in his own room, and forgot that your scout's room was next to it.'

'Then go and get his crockery.'

'He's broken it all hisself, Sir, long ago.' Saying which Weller shut the bed-room door and departed on his errand.

The bed-room door opened upon the sitting-room. It was comfortably furnished, lofty, and sufficiently large for all purposes of use and some of luxury. The curtains were of green stuff with a gold fringe or border, the book-case of polished oak was handsomely furnished with books, which showed some signs of usage, the carpet was of a warm texture and appropriate colour, the table in the middle of the room was yet laden with cigar ashes and ends, empty and half-empty tumblers, a spirit case, two decanters, and a cigar box, containing some thirty or forty regalias. There were two most luxurious arm-chairs and a couch on either side of the fireplace, which had a cheerful fire already smouldering into a white ash, as the fashion of Oxford coals is and used to be.

The scout had done well to light the fire first—for it continued to throw out a cheerful warmth—and to boil a kettle, while he spread a clean white table-cloth upon the half-rubbed table, and garnished it with cold ham and fowl and the crockery which belonged to Mr. Day: Mr. Day, who was just now reading out his essay after

chapel at the request of Mr. President Wigram and his fellow dons.

In half an hour from the time he got out of bed George Falcon was sitting in one of his easy-chairs waiting the arrival of Trevelyan and Tom Beauchamp. He was not kept long in suspense. First came a kick on the panels of the door, then the handle turned, and the two guests walked in. They were both remarkable in their way.

Trevelyan was a tall, thin, fair man, scarcely more than boy. He was quiet in manner, but with a prematurely *roué* look about him, which told of hard life before its time, and his pride in it.

Tom Beauchamp was shorter, squarer, with an older and harder look about him. He had a straight line of dark whiskers down his cheek; and a most unaffected joyous smile lighted up his face, as he burst noisily into his friend's room. They both wore their caps and gowns, as they had just come out of chapel.

'I say, Falcon, your name was called for your essay, to read out.' 'And what did they say?' inquired Falcon carelessly.

'Long looked disgusted, so did the president; and the dean made a note of it.' Then Mr. Weller walked in with the rest of the breakfast; split-fowl and truffles, with devilled kidneys.

'Please, Sir, the dean wishes to speak to you,' said he, as he proceeded to dispense Mr. Jubber's dainties.

'Very civil of the dean: I shall be at home till luncheon.' Here the scout laughed modestly, and added,—

'He desired me to say that he wished to see you at his room, Sir, at ten o'clock.'

'Then you go and tell him I'm out.' And Mr. Falcon poured out the tea.

'These things are deuced uncomfortable,' said Tom Beauchamp at this conjuncture, hitching away at a pair of flannel cricketing trowsers, which he wore under a rough pea-jacket of the period.

'Then take them off,' said Falcon, laughing, but scarcely expecting that he would do so.

'I was just going to,' replied Tom, at the same time

throwing open his upper garments, and unbuttoning his braces, with wonderful coolness, while his companions looked on with surprise. 'I was just going to, and all I hope is that they haven't taken the polish off my boots. Oh, no, it's all right,' added he, as stepping out of his flannels, he presented himself in a very neat but workmanlike pair of leathers and tops, and letting fall his cap and gown and overcoat, displayed a swallow-tailed pink, and a blue plush waistcoat, of the fashion of the day.

'That's not a bad idea : where are you going, Tom ?'

'To the Heythrop. Jim Hills is as good as a run, going from cover to cover. Weller, get my hat, please, out of my rooms ; it's on the small table by the window : and now let's eat.' After a pause, he said, 'Who do you think I saw at Woodstock yesterday, Falcon ?'

'Haven't the least idea, unless you mean Peggy Jansen.'

'Well, I don't—I mean your Cousin Harold.'

'Impossible.'

'Why impossible ? He was here last week : for he lost a hundred pounds in Christ Church.'

Here Tom Beauchamp helped himself to tobacco.

'I didn't know he'd a hundred pence to lose,' said George.

'I thought he was the moneyed man of the family.'

'I am at present ; I won seventeen pounds here last night,' said Falcon, laughing. 'What took you to bed so early ?'

'Well, I don't play,' replied Beauchamp. 'You fellows can afford it, I suppose. I can't. I find about two days' hunting a week as much as I can manage : and I'm obliged to hire every now and then to do that.' Trevelyan said nothing : gambling was a sore subject to him. And just then Tom Beauchamp's scout told him that his hack was outside the gates ; so he prepared to go.

'Do you feel sure that you saw Harold Falcon yesterday at Woodstock ?'

'Sure : he was not on the main road, but riding down the lane which runs at right angles to the road, about a mile and a half from the town. He was on a chestnut with three white legs ?'

'Of course : then he had been out with Drake, and

was going back to Waterpark : he's always there now,' replied his cousin.

'On the contrary. He wore a great coat, and rode in dark-coloured trowsers. He seemed to be coming from the old farm-house in the fields. I've never been introduced to him, but I knew him just as well as I know you.' George Falcon's face grew a shade or two paler, while Tom Beauchamp stated his impressions of Harold Falcon's presence near Woodstock ; but he was recovering himself rapidly when Tom added in a careless good-humoured way, 'I do believe that's the very house that Peggy Jansen is said to live in, with some old curmudgeon of a father. But Trevelyan will tell you all about that, Falcon ; it's more in his line than mine, and I shall be late at cover.' Saying which, putting his hat firmly on his head, and passing the string through the arm-hole of his waistcoat on to one of the buttons, this steady-going lover of the chase left the room.





CHAPTER II.

A SELFISH LOVE.

NO sooner had the echoes of Tom Beauchamp's steps died away than the two young men, who remained behind lounging and smoking, looked up at one another with a serious air. Something in the late communication had disturbed George Falcon and Trevelyan, to judge of their countenances.

'Do you believe it was your Cousin Harold that he saw?'

'I do. He could hardly have been mistaken; and yet I cannot understand how or why he was there. I know he's at Waterpark, which is only 20 miles off; but he has a very heavy match coming off (for the race is reduced to a match), and I hardly expected to hear of him in this county.'

'What could he be doing? He doesn't train anywhere about there?'

'Not he: he hasn't a horse of any kind, excepting a couple of hunters which he hired at Waterpark by the month. The white-legged chestnut is one of them.'

'Has he ever seen the girl?' said Trevelyan again, with more appearance of concern than he had yet shown.

'Not that I know of. He's never mentioned her.'

'Would he have done so, had he known her?'

'Undoubtedly; he's the greatest fool alive about money and women; and a perfect sieve as regards both. He has spent every shilling he ever had; and would tell you

every secret he ever knew, whether it concerned himself or his friend.'

'You speak feelingly, George, of your cousin's weaknesses: has he ever robbed you of the one or the other?'

'He never had a chance; and never shall,' added George Falcon, after a pause, setting his teeth, and evidently by his fixed eyes looking into some speculation beyond the present moment. 'He never shall have the chance. Harold Falcon is a second brother's son. He has squandered, or given away (which is the same thing), all he ever had, and that was not much; and as to a woman, I don't suppose he ever cared for anything but a racehorse in his life, though they say there's a woman or two cares for him.'

'Ille ter est felix—happy dog. Who's the woman?'

'His cousin, Lady Helen, Lord Falconberg's daughter, I'm told. When he's quite done, they can retire upon whatever the old lord will give them, and twenty thousand pounds of her own.'

'Does he know of his luck?' said Trevelyan, yawning.

'Not he. Never goes near them, excepting to shoot the covers. He scarcely knows Helen by sight. Besides, she is but a baby after all.'

'What's he mean to do, if he's so awfully hard-up as you say?'

'Oh, just now he's going to break the ring. I believe he's made a wonderful book on the Waterpark steeplechase, by which he stands to win four thousand to nothing. So he says, at least. He did back the Rover at a long price, I believe, and he's been first favourite for some time at a very short one. He's had a good hedge, and the bet was made with Cranstone. What are you going to do, Trevelyan?'

'I'm going to Charley Simonds's, and then to lecture.'

'Will you go to Woodstock with me?' inquired Falcon, somewhat eagerly. 'The pictures at Blenheim not being the attraction.'

'Yes; I don't mind if I do. You want somebody to look after you when you're there.' Falcon blushed—he could still blush—and then laughed uneasily. 'What time will you go?'

'After luncheon—two o'clock. We can dine at Dickenson's when we come back: or the Mitre if you like it better. We're sure to be late for hall.'

'Then go to Tom Perrin's, and order a buggy to be at the gates at two—get the old gray if you can.'

'All right.' Saying which Trevelyan left the room.

When he was gone George Falcon got up, and stood a few seconds with his back to the fire. Then he took down a book or two from his shelves, but it would not do. He couldn't read. So he began to think again; and his thoughts all went one way, or ended in one precipice—it was a precipice—Peggy Jansen and Woodstock. And his Cousin Harold.

'What the d—l had Harold to do at Woodstock, or within miles of old Jansen's house, if indeed it was he?'

In those days, up to a certain point, university life was very like what it is now, and what it always must be; and which neither Gathorne Hardy nor Mr. Gladstone will avail to alter. From ten to twelve, then as now, the hive was in full work. In and out of their little monastic holes about the quadrangles and about the gardens, came the bees—drones many of them—caps and gowns on their heads and the signs of knowledge under their arms, anthropophagi (metaphorically there they carried their heads). The time of lecture had arrived: and those who were not engaged in chasing the fox, or driving four-in-hand, were usually to be found in attendance. There were certain men with whom the former of these amusements was always a valid and admitted excuse. Tom Beauchamp was one of these.

'Where were you yesterday, Mr. Beauchamp?' said the vice-president and tutor. 'I missed you at my lecture.'

'I beg your pardon, Sir: I went to Bicester Windmill,' replied Tom, who kept his own horse, and had an acknowledged permission from the Parent-Beauchamp to spend a certain time in the field. The eldest son of a fox-hunting baronet might have done worse.

'You might have asked for leave of absence, Sir, at all events.'

'I sent my scout, Sir, to ask if you were in, and I found

you were gone out, and not likely to return in time,' said the unabashed.

'Another time, write a note, Sir. You have not encroached on your usual allowance of days, I hope.'

'I think not, Sir.'

'Nor of horseflesh either, I trust. We are anxious to restrict that pernicious habit of hiring as much as possible, Mr. Beauchamp. It's the ruin of men : they never know how much they owe, nor the misery of owing anything till it's too late. Good-morning. Will you ask Mr. Trevelyan to come to my rooms, if you should happen to see him?'

And after awhile, Trevelyan came, the youngest son of a younger son, of good birth, and no expectations beyond hard work in the colonies, or still harder in the Temple, for which he was fitting himself by self-indulgence and dissipation.

'I must ask you to write out yesterday's lecture, Mr. Trevelyan ; the habit of neglecting it is increasing in the college, and must be noticed.'

'I beg your pardon, Sir, I was out hunting ; and should have asked you if you had been in college in the morning.'

'Were you riding your own horse, Mr. Trevelyan, or a hired one?'

'A hired one, Sir.'

'Does Dr. Trevelyan approve of your hunting?'

'He allows it when I'm down, Sir,' replied Trevelyan triumphantly.

'On hired horses at two guineas a day, with a hack at a shilling a mile, six shillings the man's expenses, and a dinner at an hotel in the evening? Scarcely, I think, Sir. Will you spare me five minutes' conversation, Trevelyan?'

says his tutor in an altered and kinder tone. 'Sit down, if you have time ; if not, come to me in the evening after hall.' And Trevelyan sits down, and his tutor points out to him the evil course he has entered upon—shows him the difference between himself and the Beauchamps—reminds him of the prospects of the one and the other—and excuses the authorities of Alma Mater for being all things to all men. It makes an impression on some for the time, on some for eternity. When the seed and the

ground were well selected, in the middle of all our barrenness, it was the sprouting moment of much good fruit.

When Trevelyan left Falcon's rooms, he went to Charles Simonds's stables, and engaged a horse for the next Saint's-day. There were more prayers and no lectures on those days, so they were devoted to hunting with impunity. Tom Beauchamp rode sixteen miles to cover in an hour and a quarter. All who were in college imagined themselves busy until twelve o'clock, and then they began to think of luncheon, oyster patties, hot kidneys, Stilton cheese, and bottled stout; and the last dun sneaked out as the first pastrycook's boy entered.

On the day in question neither the dean, nor the principal, nor any of the tutors sent for Mr. Trevelyan to advise him or to impose him. The first had been tried without great success, when he was supposed to be more amenable to impression; the latter had been found to be almost as expensive as the hunting and tandem-driving it was meant to rectify; and put sovereigns by the score into the pocket of Bendell the hatter, who made a handsome thing out of the Bible-clerks, servitors, and middle men. Indeed, a poor college would be a useful institution if things go on so now.

Dress is said to have a moral effect upon man. If it be true—and I can scarcely doubt it—that a gentleman in dirty boots, a ragged coat, and badly made trowsers, feels himself less a gentleman than heretofore, then it is true that a difference of style portrays or creates a difference of character. So great is the alteration in this respect that five-and-twenty years have produced, that it is worth while to note the toilette of an Oxford man of the period of which we are speaking, lest in a few years' time no recollection of it shall remain, and the fashion shall have become as obsolete as the old stage-coach and the science of driving it.

Trevelyan was a fair average specimen of the university mode of thirty years ago; and as he prepared for his drive to Woodstock it was manifest that he was taking some pains to appear to the best advantage. Let us look at him as he emerged from his bed-room in search of his hat and gloves.

He was tall and a good figure; and without any pretensions to beauty looked like a gentleman. Moses and Son, and Nicholls and Co., did not then exist; or, if they did, cheap and ready-made clothing had not yet reached the universities. It would have been as impossible for his valet to have looked like a gentleman as it would have been absurd for him to have dressed himself like his valet. His boots were known as Wellingtons of the best make, of patent leather, and as much made for ornament as for use. Indeed, here I am reminded of the great Mr. Last, and an anecdote of those times: 'Boots not wear well? bless my heart, Sir, you have been walking in those boots: ' and so he had, and so did we, and so did Trevelyan. They were not so well fitted for that as for his foot, but they were not like the clodhoppers in which Young England rejoices now, and against which the stones in the High-street cry out. His trowsers fitted him as they could have fitted no one else, and were strapped closely over his instep by a piece of the cloth which buttoned under the arch of his well-turned foot. The trowsers were cut straight, and among well-dressed men indulged in no *ins* and *outs* about the leg. Such things had been, but were not at the time that Trevelyan made his toilette. What shall I say in praise of his coat? a frock-coat of course. It fitted him too, which is more than can be said of coats since Members of Parliament have taken to making them. It was of a soft flexible cloth, with a roughish nap, and a velvet collar. It was buttoned closely from the waist upwards towards the throat, showing to advantage the clean and manly figure of the wearer; and only sufficiently open to exhibit a neat tie of black and gold, finished by an elaborate pin—a death's head of gold and enamel, joined to a cross-bones by a small chain. His neck was not the vulture-like affair which obtains in modern days, nor did he scud under bare polls—a fashion which semi-Byronic affectation has crossed with continental foppery. It was decently enfolded in a clean, well-starched linen collar (not dog-collar), which reached the level of the incipient whisker, and terminated near the point of the chin on either side. Such was Trevelyan as he came from his afternoon toilette to drive with his friend, George

Falcon : can any modern undergraduate say as much, or declare that he ever gave the same attention to please other people as to gratify his own lazy indifference ?

As he took up his hat—ah ! I had nearly forgotten—you might have looked long through every room in T—before you would have seen a billy-cock, a sombrero, a felt, a coal-heaver, or a wide-awake. A Lincoln and Bennett, or mine ancient friends, Locke or Andre, served our turn. And the old chimney-pot, the despised of your young athletes, and the football of your Reform demonstrations, was worn for everything but to beat a cover, or pull in a racing-boat. The latter amusement was not the fashion in those days, but we flattered ourselves we could ride. As he took up one of his hats, for there were about half-a-dozen in different stages of consumption from the severity of the drag, and some falls with the Heythrop and Drake, and a generally wet season, he looked like an English gentleman fulfilling the objects of a university career

‘Are you ready, Falcon ?’

‘Very nearly : let me get a shawl : we shall be late, and the nights are cold—and—yes—it’s all right, the cigars are in my great-coat pocket.’ Saying which the two leisurely left the college.

There was nothing remarkable in Woodstock in those days. A quaint little country town, with scarcely a street in it ; an old town-hall and a market-place, and a few public-houses and hotels for the coaches, of which inns the principal was the ‘Bear.’ Mine host was a cheerful good fellow, who brewed excellent egg-flip on a cold day, and knew an Oxford man instinctively. The trade of the town was not great, and the business was only brisk for half-an-hour a day, when the ‘Defiance’ dined and changed horses, or when thirty or forty undergraduates got on their hacks, leaving their horses, jaded and dirty with the white mud of the Oxfordshire hills, to come on after their gruel. But there was a trade, and its sole representative apparently was one Thomas Brown, and that trade was ‘gloves’—men’s, women’s, and children’s gloves—and all other articles of wear in white-leather : Woodstock we called it.

At five o’clock in the afternoon in question, there

turned into Thomas Brown's shop two young men ; there being already no less than four leaning over the counter, and three more discussing the beauty of Polly Brown, outside of the door, preparatory to investing in gloves, braces, or some useless little present of female apparel : for it's difficult to say what there was not to be found ready made in Woodstock leather.

The four men leaning over the counter were breaking a lance with stout Mrs. Brown and her daughter Polly ; and there was so much of laughter and trying on of gloves and recommendation of goods, that the new comers waited a minute or two unheeded, but not for long. An inner door opened, through the glass of which a view into the front shop was easily obtained, and then came forward and took her seat in a vacant chair in the corner, a person, whom it would be difficult to forget, having once seen. Her face grew a shade paler at first, as she came in, but it was again suffused with a deeper red, and her eyes filled with conscious tears, as she and one of the new customers looked at one another. Trevelyan, for it was he and Falcon, turned away from the two, and lounging with his back to the counter, continued to watch with a satirical smile the open flirtation with the four men who were unknown to him. Falcon and the girl whispered a few words to one another, and she then began to make pretence of searching for some gloves that would fit him.

While he was trying the gloves listlessly, she might have been seen to write a line or two upon a piece of note-paper, and, folding it hastily, to push it towards the young man. George took it apparently unperceived ; and leaving the gloves on the counter, with the exception of one pair, he regarded the girl once more with a look of great affection, nodded to Mrs. Brown, and left the shop.

'Trevelyan, are you going to do anything for an hour or two ? I can't go yet, old fellow, and we can't dine now.'

'Not very well, certainly, but I'm going into the park to speak to one of the keepers about a dog of mine, which he professed to break for me. What time shall we start ? It's dark at six.'

‘I’ll be ready at seven ; there’s a moon : and we shall be back by eight.’ Saying which George Falcon lounged into the stable, and Trevelyan went in search of the keeper.

It was just getting dark — so dark as to render it difficult to distinguish persons unless well known—as a well-dressed woman turned silently out of Woodstock towards Banbury. She looked neither to the right nor left until she reached a grass lane with a gate half opened at the end, and leading apparently only towards the fields ; here she stopped a moment, and raised her veil stealthily, looking back along the road she had come, and then endeavouring to penetrate the twilight towards the field.

In the latter direction she thought she distinguished the outline of a man’s figure, and turning abruptly through the gate, she hurried towards it. She was right ; a hundred yards up the lane her lover—for such he professed to be—was waiting for Peggy Jansen.

He passed his hand through her arm, pressing it kindly, and walked by her side for a few paces in silence.

‘So you are come, Margaret, at last,’ said George Falcon.

‘Always, as I have promised,’ replied the girl, with an accent and manner slightly foreign : ‘but you have waited—I couldn’t help it, I was wanted.’

‘Oh, not long,’ said he, however, with a somewhat injured air : ‘but it always appears tedious when waiting for you,’ in the same breath making the amende. The first ebullition was very natural to him, perhaps the last not less so.

Then he spoke very kindly to her of things concerning himself, and afterwards on ordinary subjects ; but to these last she answered never a word. She only clung closer to George as they walked very slowly, stopping underneath an old straggling hedgerow and dilapidated wall, which rose on their left hand, and which enclosed partially some large grazing grounds, once an old park or pleasaunce. Once or twice George thought he detected a sob, but pretended not to have heard it, as indeed it was much suppressed, for he was a man who liked

nobody's blue devils but his own ; and though he thought he loved, or said to himself that he loved Margaret Jansen, he didn't like her tears.

'Turn back, George, we mustn't go any farther this way,' said the girl.

'And why not this way?' inquired George Falcon.

'That's my home down in the hollow, and if my father should see us——'

'What then, Margaret?'

'He would kill you, perhaps, and me certainly ;' and she clung closer to him, as if she partially realised the impression.

'I think not, Peggy. I can take care of myself at all events ; and why should he kill me?'

'If he knew all——' and to anyone who could have seen the faces through the dusk of early evening, his would have seemed paler, and hers burning with a conscious blush.

'But why need he know all?' But Margaret Jansen hid her face against her lover's shoulder, and sobbed convulsively. Then George Falcon stopped, and spoke soothingly to the poor girl till she was calmer.

'George, George, there is but one way, and you promised. You must marry me, now indeed you must ;' and she continued to sob, hiding her lovely face against his shoulder still. But George didn't answer ; and as Margaret became redder and redder he only became paler and colder.

At length he said, closely pressed upon the subject : 'Marry ! ah, Peggy ;' and here he sighed, 'if you only knew the difficulties. Wait, dearest, you must wait. How should we live, and I not through my degree?' Then the girl raised her head, and her clasp grew less tight, and for the first time an impression was left upon Peggy Jansen that she never knew George Fellowes (he had told her that was his name) until now. Her confidence in his promise had never been shaken until this moment. It might have been that she had never urged it so strongly or clung to its fulfilment with such absolute necessity. Her blushes were gone, and had given place to the pallor of fear. She bore his caresses now rather than met them.

‘And when shall I see you again, Margaret?’ said he as he wandered on by the old broken wall, thinking more of himself and the consequences to him of his wickedness, than of her and the ruin to her consequent upon her weakness.

‘You know where to find me, George, every day, and all day long. If not, come and look for me at home. But not now. Be careful, George; my mother suspects me: and if my father knows it, I have no other hope but you.’ They had wandered on during these last few words farther than they had yet come, when the girl suddenly stopped, suppressed a scream which rose to her lips, and motioned George Falcon to fall behind her. A low door at the farther end of the wall, with which he was unacquainted, had opened, and through the darkness a huge figure, made still larger by the peculiar conditions of the atmosphere, suddenly crossed the path. ‘Hush! My father,’ whispered she: ‘back, behind me: adieu; quick, away as fast as you can. George was no coward, save as far as his conscience made him so, but Peggy’s terror imparted itself to him, and he began to retreat, as the enormous figure in the distance came slowly towards the girl.

If George, as he gained the road in safety, had honestly put his feelings into words, he might have said, ‘Poor girl, that was a disagreeable, but fortunate interruption, for I should never have got away.’

‘All right, Trevelyan,’ said he walking into the parlour of the ‘Bear,’ and ringing the bell for the ostler.

‘So it ought to be, for I’ve been waiting three quarters of an hour. I felt strongly inclined to start without you,’ replied Trevelyan, good-humouredly.

‘Why didn’t you, then? I should,’ said the other ungraciously.

‘I can easily believe it.’ And so they drove back to Oxford.

Nevertheless, George Falcon did love the girl after his selfish fashion, and was always pining after her when he was away from her. He wasn’t a favourite with men, and missed Margaret’s expressions of affection, hasty and stolen as they were.



CHAPTER III.

PEGGY JANSEN.



HE going back reminds one of an Irishman's mode of progression in the mud ; but disagreeable as it is, it is necessary to do so for the clear intelligence of our story.

As Peggy Jansen has something to do with the interests of the principal persons concerned, the reader will be glad to know who she was, and how she came into the position in which we find her.

Her father, Bernhard Jansen, was a very extraordinary person, and his adventures would almost have furnished matter for a novel of themselves. We may take another opportunity of gratifying any curiosity on the part of our readers. At present he is subordinate to those with whom he is acting.

He was of Dutch extraction, but had become a naturalised German, living in Nuremberg, and supporting himself by an extraordinary talent for wood-carving, at the time he fell in with his wife, the mother of his only child, Margaret. He was a man of gigantic stature, of great strength, of a saturnine humour rather than a really evil disposition, and of much taste and even genius in his calling. He was known to have been a smuggler, and it was thought a pirate ; and the peaceable Nurembergers said, whatever they believed, that *der Herr Jansen* had sold himself to the devil. Perhaps he had : if so, that mysterious purchaser of bad bargains had not given much for him, unless the money had gone somewhere else, for

with all the exercise of his craft Herr Bernhard remained but poor.

In the matter of women he was not speculative, and Frau Jansen was the first he had affected. She was an Englishwoman, as remarkable in her way as he in his, and accepted him most unconditionally. She had followed the fortunes of an English family who lived at Stuttgart, and when they returned to England had chosen to remain behind, as the show-woman in one of those toy and curiosity shops so numerous in the old cities of Germany. She was an astute, clever woman, master of herself, which is much, and of other people, which is more, and of her husband, which is most. Still, after a time, with all his talents and hers too, they didn't get on. They lost money: and Bernhard Jansen was not the man to sit calmly by and see his all go without a struggle. He tried the bourse as a last resource, and that failed.

'My dear, the air of Nuremberg is not good for me.'

'Then let us go,' said she without a murmur.

'What, and give up our business here?'

'No, but sell it.' And as they kept their secret, and Bernhard had acquired a reputation, they didn't leave Nuremberg empty-handed. They spoiled the Egyptians before leaving.

'And where shall we go, liebe Frau?'

'Let us try England. I have friends there.' And in a few weeks they landed. He, she, and her little daughter, the Peggy of whom we write.

It so happened that at that time a taste for old carving was being cultivated. The taste was not yet purely ritualistic; but Oxford had commenced a movement, which combined high art with religion. Bernhard had none of the latter, any more than his wife, but he had much of the former. So much that Wardour Street gave him high wages, and he might have done well. For the world, that is, the antiquarian world, liked his humour as well as his work. But he would gamble. He tried everything; the Stock Exchange, the hells of the quadrant, the race-course. Having borrowed then as much as he could, he took to lending—this was his wife's suggestion. They began to grow rich, which men soon do who lend a little money at sixty per cent.

But the professional money-lenders didn't like him; and his size made him conspicuous. He began to be known in the courts, and an awkward case or two among sub-alterns in the army did him no good. It was time to beat a retreat.

Bernhard felt no intense admiration for Frau Jansen, but he loved his little daughter Margaret, who was growing into a beauty. He consulted his friends, and he heard of a tumble-down farmhouse ten miles from Oxford, where he might be out of the way of some importunate creditors, and yet work diligently at his calling. The house was to be had at a nominal rent. It was of no great value; large and commodious, out of repair, every room in it big enough for a workshop. Frau Jansen, too, had an idea; and as it involved ambitious thoughts for her daughter, that neighbourhood did as well as, or better than, another.

Frau Jansen thought that her daughter might marry a gentleman. She was quite good-looking enough for it; and, as the manner of foreigners is, her education had fitted her for it. In the meantime she must help them to live: there must be no drones in the hive. It was not difficult. The trade of Woodstock furnished the means. The girl was quick and handy: she became valuable as a skilful glover; and her beauty made her acceptable to Mrs. Brown, as an attraction. Oxford went raving mad after Woodstock gloves, capes, pelerines, and tippets, bordered with lace; and Peggy Jansen became the reigning toast. But Peggy had been taught to carry her pitcher to the well without breaking it, and for some time she succeeded.

The farm was a dull house; and Bernhard Jansen's mode of life did not tend to enliven it. Sometimes he felt dull himself, and then he called for his daughter as King Cole would have called for his beer.

'Mother, what good does Peggy at our friend the glover's?'

'Mind your own business, Giant.'

'*Sapperment!* it is mine own business. What makes the girl there?' said he, in his own idiom.

'She makes money, and that's something. Every little helps.'

'But I don't want the little helps: I prefer Peggy.'

And Herr Jansen was not far wrong, for at eighteen Peggy was a very charming girl.

‘Attend to your carving, Giant. I tell you the girl will do well enough. There’s scores of them coming to see our Madge every term. It isn’t gloves or tippets they want : wait a bit——’

‘Wait a bit, indeed. What’s that? Don’t let me hear that, Mrs. Jansen. Would you sell your own flesh and blood for a mess of potage? *Verdamme mich*, will they marry my daughter?’ And Jansen rose, dashing down the tools with which he was working.

‘Will they marry your daughter?—and why not, pray? I suppose they may look at her first. A cat may look at a king. There, go on working : don’t be alarmed about Margaret while she’s with me.’ The giant retired growling, like a disturbed and incredulous mastiff as he looks at the butcher’s boy, and sees that, if not a thief, he is at least the representative of one.

But time reconciles man to much. It reconciled Bernhard Jansen to his wife’s arguments, and to the fact of his daughter doing something for her livelihood. Life is uncertain ; and though he had good employment and wages, and could find money for other people, the Old Farm, as it was called, became more dilapidated, Frau Jansen had less money in the old stocking, and the carver did not improve in temper as in times of prosperity.

We come now to an extraordinary page in Jansen’s life, and to its explanation. When employed as a professional gambler, and a race-commissioner, he had made a large but mixed acquaintance. A stentor, of some six feet six in height, and of proportionate circumference, can scarcely shout ‘Seven to one, bar one,’ for many weeks without being noticed and known. Jansen was known, and known favourably. And he was known favourably because, though not a fortunate man nor a rich one, he would wait for his money. And he had many opportunities of practising patience. For either the times were bad (they always are so), or the morals of the rising generation were bad : and when they ought to have paid their losses, they were always desiring to negotiate bills. And by some means or other, quite inexplicable to himself, and therefore to his wife and other people, Bernhard Jansen got into the way

of discounting them. He would have made money, but he had none; or spent it as soon as he could get it: and in the matter of money he only acted as the agent of other people. He was popular with his customers; and the men liked to come to his house to look at his carving and his pictures, his curiosities and his daughter.

'Where's that money going to, Giant? It's wanted here.'

'That's going to a great swell, Dame Jansen, to pay his book.'

'And what do you call a great swell?'

'He has no money and many friends. There name is good.'

'You mean legion.'

'No, I mean good—good to sound and good to write. They look well upon paper, and my friends like them in the City.' So Bernhard Jansen became and continued a bill-discounter; receiving sixty per cent. for other people, and getting five for himself, with all the credit of the transaction.

And this is how Peggy Jansen found herself at Mrs. Brown's, cutting out, or rather sewing, Woodstock leather, and the admiration of the undergraduates, who buzzed round her, like flies round a honey-pot, till they found there was no reciprocity of attachment. Then they turned to the responsive beauties of Jane Brown and her sister, who regarded all undergraduates as made for the conversion of their silver into Browns.

But Peggy's was a position of much temptation: and though perseverance even in such pursuits is not a speciality of university life, which rather deals with the innocence of butterfly persecution than determined siege; still that immunity from danger which is said to arise from numbers is in these cases wanting: and a spurious imitation, called *passion*, sometimes usurps the place and fulfils the office of a holy love. It must not be supposed that Mrs. Jansen had thus knowingly exposed her daughter to such dangers. She was a clever and a cunning woman; and overreached herself for lack of that worldly experience, which never belongs to women in her class of life. Experimentally she knew nothing of such temptations: had she known them it would only have been to have laughed at them: and

to say truth, she scarcely believed in their existence. Those who fell she thought to be radically bad, which she knew Peggy was not; and those who failed in attaining an honourable pre-eminence among their equals, she believed to want the foresight and the attractions which Peggy possessed. Mrs. Jansen was a schemer; but not so deliberately wicked as she ought to have been for her punishment.

For it is a melancholy truth that Margaret fell in love, not with an open-hearted, soft-headed, inexperienced rattlebrain as she might have done, and followed her mother's prescription of marrying him out of hand, and calling herself a lady for life, but with a hard, selfish nature, who was sure to turn his conquest to his own account, without regard to her. From the beginning he had schemed as deeply as the mother, and so safely that it was no hard-fought battle. He gave her no opportunity of withdrawing her queen before it was checked and taken. He had given a wrong name, he had promised all that she could have asked for, and to the last moment she believed her betrayer. He might have believed too in his will to fulfil all his promises, for he was in love as such men are. But circumstances were much against him. He was not his own master in the eye of the world, though uncontrolled or nearly so by positive ties. He could have made an honest man of himself—the world would have called it making an honest woman of poor Peggy—if he had pleased. But there were obstacles and feelings that required fighting, and that fighting was not to be done by a soldier who had only trained himself to run away. 'Because I have been a blackguard, shall I forsooth be a fool too? And yet, poor girl, what beauty it is; and if it could only be hushed up, why shouldn't I be happy with her? I'm sure I shall never love anyone as I do Peggy. And what are my prospects after all? The colonies! well, why not? There are too many of us Falcons about in this country to get a loaf apiece.' With which vague notions he lit a cigar and began to think, as he urged Treveylan to get on faster. Margaret went home on the arm of her father, whose ominous silence boded no measured language when he should think fit to speak.



CHAPTER IV.

OUR HERO, SUCH AS HE IS.

AMONG those whose necessities had brought them in contact with Herr Jansen, was one of whom we shall hear more as the story progresses. He was one of many, but with his idiosyncrasies, which make him an interesting study of a rather uninteresting class. Harold Falcon belonged to the aristocracy, Eton, Oxford, the Guards. There was a time when such antecedents might have impressed the world favourably. They have the elements of cheerfulness, intellect, fashion, heroism. But now we want mystery, gloom, crime, improbability. And if we can only plead that the facts be taken from real life, that the poisoner was our own familiar friend, that the mystery belonged to a real cupboard, and the arsenical mixture to a living chemist, what revision shall be bold enough to take us to task? Who shall say that slow poison is not the universal curse (like Latin verse) of '67, or that the normal condition of society is not death by fire or suffocation in a well.

But in '41 it was not so. Men and women, that is, ladies and gentlemen, died in their beds, or intended to do so. They did odd things—they spent too much money; they went first to the Jews and then to the dogs; they formed questionable connections, or married as they should not; they robbed one another; became unexpectedly rich, unexpectedly poor; they gambled, they raced, but they lived in good houses, and were

to be found in the pale of society. The common vices of the great world were neither bigamy, larceny, nor murder; and when noblemen and gentlemen are concerned in such things, depend upon it the cases are exceptional.

It is but fair to the coming generations to declare thus much. We have read of Corporal Trim, Matthew Bramble, Parson Trulliber, and we know that they existed as they are represented to have done. Fielding and Smollett painted society as they knew it: sometimes bad, sometimes good, but never impossible. The present fashion of writers is different. You may meet with living men and women of the nineteenth century—murderers, bigamists, poisoners, to be sure: but I shall direct my grandchildren to go elsewhere than to the novels of the present day, if they want to form a correct estimate of the society in which their grandfather moved. Not that I would have my readers by any means to imagine that what I write has positively taken place: I desire neither to detract from my own reputation as an inventor, nor from the reputation of society, as it is, by pretending to represent even the outlines of a family history. I shall be happy to travel within the probabilities of ordinary life; taking an exceptional case here and there, and making the conduct of my *dramatis personæ* consistent with their education, temperament, circumstances, or temptations. It will give me no pleasure to turn round upon my critic and declare that facts are true and authentic, when the characteristics of my actors do not lead up to an inference of my facts.

Do not flatter yourself therefore, my friend, that you are Harold Falcon; or that you or I ever knew him in the flesh. I may know his type, so may you; you may yourself be he, for what I know or care. I hope you are; there are worse men and better. I hope still more that you have avoided his vices, and clung to his virtues; for he saw the error of his ways before he died, and lived cleanly.

But just now we have to do with his early life, with his introduction to Bernhard Jansen, which can hardly imply ecclesiastical asceticism. I mean, of course, the asceticism of the — party. He came from Eton young,

having neither father nor mother; only an aristocratic, high-minded, middle-aged, fox-hunting peer for a guardian, who had four boys and one girl of his own to look after. He spent his best days at Hawkestone Castle, with his Cousin Hawkestone, and the young Falcons, older and about the same age as himself. Lady Helen was the youngest, but what with absence and the governess, he saw little enough of her. There was his younger Cousin George too, and a sister of his own. They were all at the castle, and all welcome to whatever the castle afforded — ponies, horses, dogs, keepers, claret, books, pocket-money, and the run of their teeth.

When he left Eton, he left behind him a remarkable character, not so much with the masters as with his school-fellows and the old camp-followers of the school. He had all along seen that any acquaintance he might make with the masters would cease with his school-days, while the others were to last him his life. He was a great favourite, and possessed of exactly those qualities which were likely to make him so.

Every hero ought to be a great man if he be not a good one; and there is a great difference between the two. A hero who is neither the one nor the other, should at least have some of the characteristics of greatness or goodness. Harold Falcon had one of these at all events. He possessed a recklessness and a courage which made him many admirers if they produced fewer imitators. Perhaps it is as well that this latter was the case. An anecdote at each epoch of his early life will be sufficient to convince the reader that whatever he became as a man he was a remarkable boy. It was Harold Falcon who was caught smoking, when that virtue was rarer than it has become since, and upon being questioned by the celebrated Dr. Keate, assured him that it was for corns. His comrades, caught like himself *flagrante delicto*, hung their heads and were silent, or replied with more truth, but less recklessness, 'Nothing, Sir.' His advent at the university was not that of a common man. He entered Christ Church with a terrier at his heels and a sack on his back; and within his first hour—others talk of their first term—he had assembled some choice old Etonians, for whose pleasure he drew the badger in

his bed-room. Such a manifest talent for scrapes could not live under a bushel ; and by the time he had won a college steeplechase or two, and had shown the dark-blue first in the inter-university steeplechase in the vale of Aylesbury, the college authorities seemed to think he had done enough to ensure him a degree somewhere else ; and without proceeding to expulsion recommended Lord Falconberg to remove his nephew's name from the books. Not, as they observed parenthetically, that he could not have taken a most respectable position in the schools, but that his tastes were scarcely consistent with that future which high academical honours point to, but do not necessarily achieve. The Bench of Bishops, the Ermine, the Houses of Parliament, and the Bar, have, it is true, exhibited much and profound scholarship—the result of Eton and Harrow, Oxford and Cambridge ; but those cases have been almost universally dissociated from badger-baiting and steeplechasing while *in statu pupillari* ; and the only point in which we detect any similitude between the two cases, is the rather remote one of corns.

‘Harold,’ said Lord Falconberg, leaning back in an easy chair in his library, while his nephew stood with his hand upon the table a little distance off, ‘I’ve had some little difficulty, but I have succeeded, at the War Office, and you are gazetted to the Fusileer Guards. Hawkestone wished it, and so did you ; so I pressed it.’ Lord Hawkestone was his eldest son.

‘I’m sorry you found any difficulty ; there ought to have been none.’

‘Certainly there ought to have been none, considering what this government owes to our family ; I don’t know that there would have been but for that foolish escapade of yours ——’

‘No great harm hunting the drag or driving the Tallyho, uncle,’ said Harold, sitting quietly down, as if to argue the point.

‘No great harm in driving it, the harm was in upsetting it. You’ll find, Harold, that in the profession you’re entering, bad luck is a very great fault ; and you seem to me to have had your share. According to your own account, you’ve scarcely ever been guilty without being found out.’ Here the peer smiled good-humouredly, as

if he were inclined to look very lightly on the peccadilloes in question.

After a few minutes' pause, in which Lord Falconberg seemed to be collecting his ideas, or rather his language for giving them expression, he resumed the very unusual task he had set himself of giving advice.

'No man alive, my dear Harold, ever attained greater success in his profession than your poor father. If an ample income, derived from several patent offices and sinecures, which he managed far to exceed, was any proof of this, there could be no doubt of it. He was an excellent soldier. There's nothing to be done without discipline; and of all things beware of debt.' It occurred to Harold that perhaps if his uncle and he were to change places the peer might better appreciate his own advice. 'You will have temptations to surmount, as all men with your limited means must have. Eton and Oxford ought to have given you some insight into such matters.'

'I think they have, Sir,' said Harold, who felt that he was expected to say something. 'I think they have;' and he could not help smiling at the conceit.

'The regiment is not necessarily an expensive one. You can live almost as you like. Make what use you can of Grosvenor-square in the season, and get some convenient rooms in St. James' Street or Pall Mall. Your poor father's income of course went with him. His life insurance and the few thousands he left behind him will be equally divided between you and Adelaide; and as I shall continue the allowance I have hitherto made of a couple of hundreds a-year, you may with strict economy do very well. Whenever you get away you'll always find a home here.' And then the peer thought he had almost exhausted his topics of advice and counsel, so Harold thanked his uncle for the substantial assistance he promised him.

'And when am I to join, Sir?'

'Oh, not immediately. Hawkestone will be down to-morrow, and then you can consult him; he'll tell you when to go to the duke's levée, and help you in any way, except in lending you money. There never was such a fellow as that to overdraw. Whatever you do, Harold, avoid debt, and never buy a horse with calf-knees—they

are sure to come to grief sooner or later.' Saying which the good-humoured old peer rose and led the way to the stables. 'Now I'll show you Lady Helen's hack. She'll be home from Paris for good in a fortnight, and I mean to surprise her.'

And so Harold Falcon got over his university difficulties, and found himself in the Scotch Fusileers, in which regiment his cousin Lord Hawkestone was senior lieutenant and captain, and a most irreproachable young officer, with the exception of that one capacity for over-drawing his allowance by some hundreds, which in his case was a matter of very little importance.

We have seen that upon two other important occasions Harold Falcon was by no means indebted to his position in society for the eminence he attained at once; neither did he seem inclined to shine by borrowed light in his new occupation. It was scarcely known that a cousin of Hawkestone's had joined; he had hardly been seen on the steps of the Guards' club, or at St. James's, before he came rather prominently before the British public, and especially the sporting part of it, as the winner of the Liverpool. Now this was a rather high pedestal to have perched on for the practice of economy and self-denial; the more so as his brother officers were quite ready to acknowledge the reflected glory by every mark of popularity. The winner of the Liverpool, who has graduated nowhere in horseflesh but in the provinces or at a university, must be a genius. And Byron himself could hardly have woke and found himself more famous than Harold Falcon on the day after the Liverpool. If there was any doubt about it, it soon ceased; for he stated at breakfast in the club on the following morning, with a simplicity only to be found in an embryo guardsman, that he had given seven hundred for the winner immediately after the race; and was going to try to borrow the money to pay for him.

To those who know the value of money under the circumstances, it will not be necessary to say how much Harold Falcon paid for it. He and some of his friends called it ten per cent., but as it was borrowed only for three months we shall call it what it was—forty. 'And very fair too,' said the discounters, who knew all about

him, 'he'll have ten thousand when he comes of age, his pay—on which he can't live—and two hundred a year from the peer. He's lucky to get it at all.' And so he was ; and nothing but his extraordinary good looks, which made an impression on that gigantic middleman, Bernhard Jansen, who was looking about for high-class paper, got him the money. With a winner of the Liverpool, a talent for steering him, and a necessity for getting money without his uncle's knowledge, if possible, it is not remarkable that in a few years, the time in fact at which we have arrived, Harold Falcon had got through his little fortune, and could have paved Pall Mall with his acceptances. Somehow or other Lord Falconberg's words had something in them. Luck was a great thing in the profession ; and Harold always lit on his feet. Something came off the day before the little bill was due, and then he paid a portion and renewed. The women said, what a pity the handsomest man in London was such a pauper ; and the men said, 'the best fellows always went to the devil first.'





CHAPTER V.

MUST WIN A POT O' MONEY.

THE Holt was a fine old place, about a mile from Waterpark. Large, grand, dingy, and badly furnished, save in the matter of old-fashioned sofas and modern arm-chairs. It is curious to remark how far we excel the ancients in the latter article of comfort, and their superiority to us in the former ; deep-seated, large, luxurious ; a sofa as big as a bed ; and not a couch. I don't mean to say that a newly-furnished London drawing-room in a third-rate house, or a semi-detached villa about Pimlico, would not be spoilt by the introduction of this rare luxury, behind and beneath which children may play at hide and seek, or which—*O tempora, O mores !*—might serve to shelter more important sinners if the world be as bad as it is reported to be by those who profess to know it. It (the sofa I mean, not the world) would either put to the blush the modest blue-and-silver trumpery which does duty for fashion at a cheap rate (twelve and sixpence in the pound), or it would look so like a bull in a china-shop as to ensure immediate rejection. There wasn't a room in the Holt that had not one or more of them, drawn up alongside of the ample dogs and huge fireplaces, or at the foot of the large comfortable old bedsteads, with their cherubs and crowns and coronets in polished oak, which frightened the wicked and the timid, when the lurid glare of their flickering fire shone upon them at midnight. The Holt was a pure bachelor's house at present. Every room in

it might have had a new carpet. Not one excepting the drawing-room but exhibited symptoms of shooting-boots, dog's victuals, and cigar ashes, and—*horresco referens*—the bed-rooms themselves smelt of smoke.

After this description of the house you will scarcely want to go as far as the stables. You will be wrong. In those three sides of a quadrangle you will see all the lavish expense of the owner. The interior has all the cleanliness and decoration which Benedict would have given to the house. Not a luxury is wanting that can be obtained with due regard to ventilation and health. No smoking there ; it's a rule of the place. The property is too valuable to be burnt. Whether or no the same estimate is attached to the ancestors that decorate the walls amidst the valuable Angelos, Caraccis, Poussins, and Carlo Dolces, the heir-looms of a long and wealthy line, I can't say ; but it is quite clear that the risk may be run. I believe, if no sense of shame withheld the avowal, that Dick Carruthers would prefer to see the whole house in flames, as long as nobody was in it, to the smallest accident to some half-dozen of the tenants of those loose boxes. He knows all the pictures, he says, and he never means to look into one of the books ; while he enjoys a fresh pleasure every time he gets on to the back of any one of his horses, and wins more money pretty nearly every time he sees them run.

If a lady is honouring me by reading this book, I can forgive her curiosity to know something more of Dick Carruthers. It is but natural that she should like to analyse the Dick Carruthers of this wicked world with a view to avoid them. No man need want to know much about him ; there are plenty more where he came from.

He was a man of large fortune, old family, without more education than was to be picked up *accidentally* at a public school. He was what you or I should have called 'a good fellow,' if we knew him a little : if we went to stay with him once a year, for example, to shoot his covers or to ride—well, no, not unless he was well assured of your capability. He was fond of filling his house at certain times, and with certain men, because *he* liked it, without much reference to them. If you didn't want a

dinner, and were quite capable of appreciating a good one, he would be most happy to see you ; and if you had half-a-dozen houses to go to, and very large studs at your command, he would bore you to come to him, and ride his horses. But if you wanted a dinner, or if you would like to have stayed with him for change of air, or rest, or health, he certainly would not have cared to ask you. If you were a poor devil, fond of hunting, without a horse to ride, Dick Carruthers would have recommended you to go to—Tollitt. There are plenty of men, different from this, who like helping the lame, blind, halt, and needy ; and I have the pleasure of their acquaintance and enjoy it. I hope they'll accept of this handsome acknowledgment : but there are plenty of the other sort too, who sail through the world under the name of 'good fellows,' 'capital fellows,' 'first-rate fellows,' and Dick Carruthers was one of them : but he's nothing to do with the story. Let's see who he had in the house that has.

'Who's coming to dinner to-day, Dick?' said Harold Falcon, as they sauntered across the hall, and saw the preparations going on through an open door.

'Loxton and Dashwood, and an Oxford man, Beauchamp, whom you don't know. Johnson,' said the master of the house, calling to the butler as he crossed the hall, 'how many have we at table to-day?'

'Only eleven, Sir. We have laid for twelve, but it's one too many.'

'Ask that unfortunate curate, Dick,' says Harold ; 'he'll enjoy it.'

'What's the use of asking him? he won't amuse us much,' replies the master.

'Perhaps we shall amuse him,' says the other ; 'he'll enjoy a good dinner and a bottle of your claret after it. I dare say he's been at work in the parish all day long, and would be glad of the change.'

'He won't play at loo nor at pool, at least not for money, and he won't lay the odds nor take them ; and he never heard of the Rover, so I don't see what use he'll be to us.' This argument was decisive, and as it wasn't Harold Falcon's house nor dinner, he said no more.

'I'll tell you what we'll do after luncheon, Falcon ; we'll get Armitage to ride with us over to Longford, and

ask the rector to dinner : he's the best judge of claret in the county, and he says that '34 of mine will be quite first-rate.' Harold acquiesced of course, and asked what they were to ride.

'You shall have out the Rover, he wants a little schooling ; and we'll put Armitage on the chestnut mare. He's sure to come to grief ; but it will do them both good :' with which considerate speech and intention for his guests' comfort, the best fellow in the world went back to the stable to give his orders, and Harold Falcon went into the library to look at the odds for the Waterpark handicap.

To the intense disappointment of Dick and his friends the chestnut was only down twice in the excursion, and Armitage was not hurt either time. The Rover fenced as brilliantly as usual, and looked all that could be desired by his backers.

The rector of Longford, a good sort of man, who might rather be called a black squire, accepted the invitation which was given him : and he belied neither the soundness of the claret nor of his own constitution, when his dog-cart was ordered at half-past eleven to carry him back to his home.

We write of a time when smoking was not what it is now. I had never seen a gentleman with a pipe at that time : and the nearest approach to it was the remnant of the parsons Adams or Trulliber, as exhibited in a Welsh curate. Cigars were admissible at the universities and in bachelors' houses ; and some few large and very commodious country-seats boasted a proper smoking-room. Had anyone, even at Dick Carruthers', then told me that I should live to see the colouring of meerschaums the principal occupation of our young men, I should have believed in it much as I should have believed that a morning visit could be paid in Grosvenor-square in a shooting jacket and a felt hat.

But inasmuch as smoking was not such a business then as now, it was more of a pleasure ; and the men who did smoke enjoyed the luxury with a gusto as superior as that of the moderate claret drinker to the indiscriminate toper of all kinds of poison. Nay, I can hardly hesitate to say that the tobacco was better and the appreciation of it juster. For as the amiable youth, who leaves a lower

form at Eton to finish that education which has never yet been begun, furnishes himself openly with regalias at ninepence, and cabanas at sixpence a piece, it is difficult to believe that such a temptation to plunder can be resisted. The British merchant is, as we know, proof against much; but, unless it be from the heads of the profession, such a box of cigars as perfumed the billiard-room at the Holt on the evening in question, is seldom produced in these degenerate days.

'How did the horse go-to-day, Falcon?' says young Dashwood of the Fourth Dragoon Guards, chalking his cue and proceeding to hole his adversary in the middle pocket.

'Have you backed him yet?' replies Harold Falcon.

'Not for a halfpenny. Game; that's another fiver,' upon which Lord Farrington, with a readiness which did him credit, instead of taking it, handed over a ten pound note, and resigned his cue.

'The sooner you do so the better. He was at seven to one, now he's at four, and he may be at evens before they start,' again says Falcon.

'We have heard of the fox and his brush. You have backed him yourself.'

'I have: and if you want an opinion of his merits, I can give an honest one: for I rode him to-day. I believe he'll win. He's very fast, and nothing but a sheer accident can get him down.'

'How many are going for the steeplechase?' inquires Sir Harry Armitage.

'There are six or seven likely to start; but no one knows till the day. He's thoroughbred; and the chances are that none of the others are so.'

'I believe he'll win, if he remains all right,' remarks Dick Carruthers, who has taken apparently little interest in the conversation. 'He can give anything in the stable two stone at least: and he has just time to be leisurely and carefully prepared.'

'Then back him yourself, Dick,' calls out Farrington from the other end of the room, where he was lounging; for the discussion about the Rover had put an end to the billiards for the time. Back him yourself, and then we shall know you're in earnest.'

'So I will at four to one, if anyone will make it worth

my while : I'll do it to a thousand.' Nobody immediately responded, and one or two laughed.

'The odds are a little long, Carruthers,' said Harold, 'but I'll do it ; I can afford it. I'll lay you four thousand to one : book it.' And Harold Falcon took from the pocket of his dress-coat the inevitable betting-book.

'Hang it, Harold,' said Farrington again ; 'that's heavy betting.'

'Not too heavy—I'll have a run for my money at any rate. I took seven thousand to one myself—so I stand to win there to nothing, at all events. I don't think that beggar Carruthers meant anything,' said Falcon, laughing good-humouredly, 'but we've nailed him now.' The expression of surprise on the faces of most of Dick's guests was marvellous : and knowing Harold Falcon's general impecuniosity they were not prepared for such a wager. However, the bet was booked, and there was an end of the business.

'Is that your cousin at T—— ? There's one of your family up there whom I know very well,' said Beauchamp, turning suddenly to Harold Falcon : a tall, thin, rather light man. And he was proceeding to give further details, when Harold interrupted him good-humouredly.

'Yes : never mind about saying how ill-favoured he is—that's my cousin—not much of the family-cut about him. What does he do—read ?'

'Just now he's said to be very spoony on a girl they call Peggy Jansen.'

'Just the sort of fellow that would be spoony on Peggy Jansen,' says Harold Falcon, 'isn't he, Farrington?'

'What ! do you know Peggy Jansen ?' says Beauchamp, opening his eyes with astonishment.

'Of course I do—her father's a most respectable man, and a great friend of mine.' Here the rest, who were already initiated in the mysteries of bill-discounting and Bernhard Jansen, laughed. 'I'm glad George didn't see me lay four thousand to one against the Rover.'

'Why so ?' said two or three at once, Beauchamp among them.

'Because he's fond of money, and it might upset him to think of so much good credit going out of the family coffers. I don't like to call it hard cash.'



CHAPTER VI.

JANSEN'S HOUSEHOLD ARRANGEMENTS.

THE interior of the farm-house near Woodstock, in which Jansen and his wife and daughter lived, was remarkable externally and internally. Its gable ends and peculiarity of building, without any settled design or order, the black-coloured rafters and beams which ran along it through the red bricks, crossing them and supporting each other, with the wooden eaves which overhung the ground story, made it eminently picturesque. It wanted however in comfort, whatever it gained in appearance inside and out. It was not so much the neglect of poverty as of indifference. No attempt was made, though the winter was passing away, to train the creepers which hung in wild luxuriance over its door and windows. The grass was uncared-for, excepting by a single goat, who, tethered by a cord, was attempting to keep down the grass-plot : and the last year's beds seemed to be much in the state in which a northern autumn was likely to have left them.

Inside affairs were only so far different, that as in this climate we live in-doors and not out, personal necessities demand some provision of warmth. The square old hall, paved, not boarded, was uneven and broken ; the room on the right, a large, square, well-shaped chamber panelled and dark, was used as a workshop : it contained at present a long carpenter's table or settle ; a variety of tools, and coloured woods fit for working, and some splendid models of carved birds and flowers. The room was simply white-washed as to its ceiling and wall above the oaken wain-

scot. It contained, however, some very extraordinary curiosities in the way of clocks, toys, and automata, besides fine old specimens of carving in various woods and styles. There were, too, some valuable pictures, but all by Dutch masters; and some of them were family portraits, burgomeisters and city dignities, who would have shamed—with their fur cloaks, gold chains, and magnificent beards—the lord-mayors and common-councilmen of the greatest commercial city in the world. They stand in need of a flattering Holbein, Vandyck, or Rubens to bring them up to the mark of old Bernhard Jansen's ancestors; for such they were said to be. There was no attempt at hanging them now, though it was reported that some had undergone that process in more perilous times, when Horn and Egmont suffered too. There they stood leaning up against the wall, or propped against a chair which would certainly not have borne their living representatives.

Had you visited every room in the house but one, and that was his daughter Margaret's room, you would have seen much the same sort of thing; for a Nuremberg life and the peculiarities of her husband's occupation, had made Dame Jansen very indifferent to English tidiness; and she picked her way among the broken furniture with as much ease as Herr Jansen knocked it down.

But there was one curiosity in the room greater than any other there, and this was Bernhard Jansen himself. He was sitting away from the fire-place, which was well filled with a mixture of wood and coal. His coat was off, as though he had been engaged in his occupation; and his huge frame was resting easily in a large and comfortable arm-chair. He was smoking a German pipe of painted porcelain, of some value, and of a size to match himself. At his right-hand was a long-necked bottle of excellent Schiedam, a tumbler, and sugar basin of silver of antique pattern, and a jug of boiling water stood near. He was engaged in looking over a betting-book. We have already spoken of his size: he was a handsome man, in many respects, too. His eyes were large and bright, though overshadowed with thick brows, and the lower part of his face was almost concealed by a drooping moustache and a long, silky, and venerable beard. In the present day this would not have been as remarkable as it was then.

The door opened, and a tall, meagre-looking woman of about forty-three or four years of age entered the room. Her features, too, were straight and good, but not pleasant to look upon. The light was waning, as it was nearly half-past five. The Frau rested a moment on the threshold of the door, and then advanced into the room.

'Mrs. Jansen,' said the occupant, emitting a cloud of very fragrant tobacco, but looking sternly up from the book, in which he was calculating, not bets, but the dates of discounted bills, 'the tea is not ready yet.'

'That's no reason why you should be drinking hot Hollands-and-water at this time ;' for it was a remarkable fact that Frau Jansen made a point of increasing her own ill-humour to match that of her husband : having begun life with a little the best of it in that respect, she had too much self-respect ever to lose caste.

'I drink what I like,' replied he, knitting his brows.

'Say, rather, you like what you drink. I should think, Giant, you've made it too strong of the lemon, by your temper.' Giant was not so much a term of endearment as it first appears to be. It was something between 'Bernhard' and 'you old fool,' and could be turned either to one or the other at a moment's notice. Herr Jansen continued to smoke in silence.

'I thought how it would be when Peggy was gone.'

'As far as the girl is concerned it would be a good thing if she was never to come back again. Look at that.' And here Herr Jansen held out a letter to his wife ; which she read and returned to him.

'And where did this come from?' said she, after a moment's hesitation.

'From that precious glover, who's making a sale of her own daughters, and would be glad to send yours to the same market.'

'Hoity toity.' And here in strong emotion, be it remarked, Frau Jansen became as English as she had been twenty years ago. 'I suppose you mean you interfered as usual just at the wrong time. If you expect to marry your daughter respectably by sending her away every time a gentleman says or writes a civil word to her——'

'Civil word, *donner wetter!* Frau Jansen,' and here the Giant struck his fist violently on the table, shaking

everything in the room but his wife's nerves, 'do you call this G. F.'s (whoever he is) civil words? Doesn't he ask her to meet him without the knowledge of her father or her mother? Is that the English for civil words, Frau Jansen? for if so, I like better the language of my own country. It wasn't the way I asked you to be my wife. Do you know who this G. F., as he calls himself, is?' And then he held out the note once more, flattening it for his wife's perusal with his other hand.

'Do I know? of course I do. But the man's in such a hurry, there is no doing or saying anything. And the Frau turned round, and opening her hands, appealed to the other curiosities of the room. 'Has she a secret from her mother, do you think? And now, when matters were beginning to take a turn, hey, presto! she's gone. Send for her back, and beg her pardon for your suspicions.' This was a long speech and a cunning one, but Herr Jansen was not to be turned from his former question.

'Who is this G. F.? Yes, Frau Jansen,—this G. F. whom I heard talking to our Peggy on the other side of our wall? Would that I could have caught him. I tell you, woman, they did talk of marriage; but it was she, not he.' The fact is that Bernhard Jansen had heard that evening more than was good for him, yet not quite enough.

'Then, stupid, I tell you who the G. F. you speak of is—he is George Fellowes; he is what you call edel, noble; but we don't overrun our country with small nobility, we are satisfied with gentlemen, Edel männer. Will not that do for your daughter?'

'Honestly, Mrs. Jansen, it will. And when such an one comes to carry off my lamb, he will come by the door of the sheepfold. He'll not climb over the wrong way. If he does, he'll meet the fate of the wolf. You understand?'

'Good,' replied the woman; 'let her marry whom she will, only let her love him. That won't be one of your workmen—artisans. She has not been taught to love such, Herr Jansen. You have never taught her to love such. You wouldn't like to mend chairs and tables, no more will she.'

'Love, did I say love? No! I said marriage. If

this Fellowes will marry her—well : but I know him better. However, she is gone for the present, and until these boys return to their homes, she must remain away. She shall come no more into temptation.'

'Temptation ! listen to me. You have told me of your blood ; your ancestors, look at them. Shall your daughter marry beneath them ? They were great men in Holland and in Germany. She has beauty, learning, wit (of which, indeed, she had none). You have ambition for her, Giant. Leave her to me.'

The giant mixed himself more grog, and forgot his tea. He held his tongue, for in truth, he thought to a certain extent with his wife, but he had his reasonable fears. His open nature was more than a match for his wife's worldliness. Bernhard Jansen would have liked his daughter to have married a gentleman. He had seen some of all sorts, and he knew Peggy to be unfitted for the life of an artisan, even were he one of his own class. Besides, he knew what his wife did not ; that there was a little money, a thousand or two even, to go with her. A relation had left it her, and he had improved it ; and in all his difficulties he had never diminished what he called Peggy's fortune. At all events she was out of harm's way now at a cousin's house in Scotland, who was well-to-do in the world ; and though he wanted his daughter, he would keep her there till the wolf, as he chose to call him, was away from the neighbourhood.

He was still in a brown study ; his wife held her tongue, and candles had been brought him by their single maid-servant. Frau Jansen pretended to sleep, and allowed the Hollands and pipe to do duty for tea. Just then a horse came into the old court-yard, and a man's voice inquired for Mr. Jansen. The master put on his coat and went out.

'Ah, ah, Mr. Falcon—you—so late ? What is it now ?' said he, ushering into the room our old acquaintance Harold Falcon.

'The old story, Jansen. Money. I must have money, and at once.'

'Money is scarce : besides, that last bill——'

'Shall be paid, Jansen—it is due next week ; but I must have five hundred to-morrow at latest.'

‘And the names?’

‘Good, my own and Lord Barthefield,’ replied Harold.

‘And the percentage?’ said Jansen, not disposed to make difficulties with so good a customer as Harold had hitherto proved.

‘Shall be as before—three months only—I shall be in funds.’

‘Then give me your acceptance for six hundred; but you must give me time to send to London. The day after to-morrow, captain.’

‘Good. I may depend upon it.’ And Harold rode rapidly out of the yard towards Oxford. When Frau Jansen heard who the visitor was, she said, ‘There, Giant, why don’t you do something of that sort for Peggy?’

‘Peggy, by Heaven, it shall be. Frau Jansen is right.’ And Herr Jansen began to think in earnest. But first he lit another pipe.





CHAPTER VII.

THE COUSINS.

HAROLD Falcon lost no time on the Woodstock road ; and, indeed, his horse was not inclined to let him. He was an Oxford hack, and knew the road and the pace he was expected to go. It's an honest, good animal, or was in those days, so long as he was well fed, but possibly he may have degenerated. When we have a poor man's college or a Nonconformist hall, he ought to go out altogether in compliment to the new comers. At present he only finds himself a little *de trop* from the able use that undergraduates are learning to make of their own legs. Well, it is cheaper at all events, and I have become a father since those days. I have changed sides.

When Harold reached Oxford, having left his horse at the stables, he walked into T—— College, and through the gate, which was still open. The porter was standing on the steps of his *conciergerie*, and Harold asked if Mr. Falcon was in his rooms.

'Yes, Sir,' said Walker grinning facetiously. 'He's in his rooms ; glad to be the first to tell you the news. Your cousin got his "testamur" yesterday, Sir ; there was only one of us plucked, Sir, and we've nineteen going for honours. They do say there'll be two firsts quite certain, and I am told they'll give Mr. Falcon an honorary fourth. But there's nothing so uncertain as a honorary fourth. I've seen more gents disappointed over a fourth than over anythink. There was Mr. Jenkins, now, of course

he never read, but he was——' By this time Harold had got half-a-sovereign out of his pocket, which it was clear that old Walker coveted, if he did not deserve, and which saved him the melancholy rehearsal of Jenkins' talents and disappointment. 'Thankye, Sir,' said the old man, putting it away in his waistcoat pocket that it might not mingle with the half-crowns and shillings he had already received; 'thankye, Sir; I'm sure I hope Master George will get a fourth, for we think a deal more of it than a second or a third. It's almost as good as a first, only the president don't care so much about it, cos it don't look so well on the list,' by which time Harold was out of earshot and nearing his cousin's rooms.

He found George Falcon preparing for the reception of a supper party. As might have been expected, learning was at so low an ebb that its most ordinary exhibition was about to be celebrated by a splendid entertainment. George was about to celebrate his success by the most barbarous of festivals. In another hour it was at its height. An apology is always due to the reader for an introduction of an Oxford supper party; not only has it been done *ad nauseam*, but it is so little worth doing that I shall make but short work of it. Christ Church and Merton sent each its contingent; and a few of his most intimate associates from his own college made up some sixteen or eighteen guests. Flat deal slabs of ready-opened oysters preceded the heavier viands: cold turkeys, chickens, ham, tongues, and pressed beef, with a fair assortment of jellies and sweetmeats, tempted carnivorous appetites that had only dined about four hours before; champagne, and huge jorums of bishop, cardinal, egg-flip, and punch were waiting to be consumed. The table groaned, but the guests were not yet arrived. The supper was as refined as the conversation was likely to be. Who has not assisted at some such uncivilised rites, and who does not wonder at his own stupidity? The only thing not to wonder at in the whole performance is the headache of the following morning. George welcomed his cousin with a nod, as he decanted some sherry.

'I congratulate you, George, and myself too.'

'On what?'

'You on your examination, and myself on having ar-

rived before the savages who are evidently expected.' George Falcon laughed, and his cousin continued, 'I wanted two or three minutes' chat with you.'

'You can have it. Nothing very serious, I presume.'

'Well, not particularly so; it might have been worse.'

'Then you can stay to supper, and we can talk over the other business to-morrow morning,' said George, who added, parenthetically, 'D— that scout of mine, he's always losing the corkscrew,' which was and is, and will be true of all scouts, past, present, and to come.

'No, I can't do that; I've not dined yet, and you will be quite unfitted for business to-morrow; let's have it out now, and I'll go to the "Mitre" to dinner.'

'Where did you come from, Harold?'

'Last from Woodstock. I rode one of Carruthers' horses from Waterpark this afternoon, and Seckham sent over a hack to meet me. A very good one he was.'

The candles were not yet lit, and the room, which was large and lofty, continued in partial darkness, or a change in George Falcon's features at the mention of Woodstock, might have been perceptible. He remembered that Harold had been seen there unaccountably, once or twice before.

'Woodstock; that's not the shortest way.'

'There's not much difference, but I wanted to see some one.'

'I should have thought your acquaintance in that neighbourhood was small.'

'I wanted to see a man of the name of Jansen.' George Falcon now really lost his presence of mind, and looked up at his cousin wonderingly.

'And what could you want with Jansen? he lives out of Woodstock.'

'Just what I want with you now.'

'But who is Jansen?' said George, feeling that he had committed himself a little and anxious to retrieve the false step.

'If you don't know, George,' replied the other in a bantering way, 'it's as well you shouldn't make his acquaintance.'

'But I want to know. I've heard men speak of him.'

'You mean of his daughter, don't you?' and if Harold

could have seen his cousin's face now, he might have resisted the pleasure of any further banter. 'I hear you're spoony in that quarter. It's a dangerous state for an undergraduate; however, I presume you've done with the university now for some time.'

'I shall come up to keep my master's——: and now tell me what you want with me, as you won't stop to supper.'

'I want you to lend me a hundred pounds to-night. Give me a check.'

'Money's scarce,' said George, unconsciously buttoning his pocket. 'We didn't wear long slits in those days.'

'Just the very words old Jansen said. You can have it back again the day after to-morrow. The fact is I'm on my way to Borodaile's, and I can't go without it. There's not another man in the university with as much, I should think; that's why I came to you.'

'What's it worth to you, Harold?' said the other with a cold sneer.

'It may be worth a good deal or not, that's as luck goes; but I'll give you a hundred and twenty for it the day after to-morrow.'

George hesitated still, not that he really intended to refuse, but he could not part with a promise without some reluctance.

'There, never mind about calculating the percentage. Old Jansen would do it for less. I didn't see his daughter to-day; but—by Jove, I nearly forgot—as I was coming away I undertook to get a letter delivered to one George Fellowes. Old Jansen didn't know what college, but I said I'd get it done for him. I suppose George Fellowes has been getting up behind a piece of paper. Do you know him, George?' Harold did not notice George's face now, or he might have been surprised by its pained and astonished look; while holding out his hand he said with great rapidity, 'Yes, yes. I'll undertake that he gets it—it is money-matters of course,'—and taking the letter he thrust it rapidly into his pocket.

'That's all right. I don't suppose you do much in that way. Now give me a piece of paper. There: I.O.U. one hundred and twenty pounds. Accidents may happen, and you wouldn't have much to fight over, if I was to go, George. I don't suppose Adelaide would

bare, but I should feel quite unhappy at your disappointment.'

George Falcon wrote a check for a hundred pounds almost mechanically, and put the other into his pocket. It served to balance the weight of the letter to George Fellowes.

The moment his cousin left the room, he drew out the letter and tore it open; it was simple and easily comprehensible.

'SIR,

'Your attentions to my daughter are understood, and your last letter has been received. Both are estimated at their true value. It will be better for you that you should not be found in her company, or on my premises.

'Your obedient servant,

'BERNHARD JANSEN.'

George Falcon read these few lines a second time; an angry flush came to his face, and then it turned pale as the gray ashes into which he threw the note.

His Cousin Harold walked down to the 'Mitre,' whither he had sent his clothes beforehand, ordered a little dinner, walked into Christ Church, won thirty pounds at *Vingt et un*, and drove the Defiance the next morning to Stokenchurch Hill, where a carriage took him to his friend Lord Borodaile's. He did double the hundred his cousin George lent him, and immediately redeemed his I.O.U. for one hundred and twenty, to that cousin's delight, more than to his own astonishment.

Perhaps in disposition, as in appearance, no two men could be less alike than Harold and George Falcon. The former was of a gay, careless temperament, which reached positive recklessness; and his ruin (not difficult to accomplish, it must be admitted) had been achieved within a year or two of his purchase of the seven-hundred-guinea steeplechaser, and mainly by his attachment to that flattering animal and others of his class. George, on the contrary, was of a close unsympathising disposition, who went into society even at an early age for what he could get, and who gamed at a time of life when others gambled. His great and leading principle was to defend himself by

attacking others ; and though he would have been called the most unflinching player of the playmen of his day, he was as prudent as if it had been the solemnest occupation of life. He always made acquaintances, for he expected them to be useful to him ; he never made friends, lest the intimacy might be turned to his disadvantage. Harold never had an acquaintance that did not become a friend, nor a friend whom he would have hesitated to assist with his last shilling. By the time he was three-and-twenty he had no other shilling to help them with. He had most unbounded belief in his luck, which, although it beggared him and left him frequently without a hundred pounds in the world, was always doing him a good turn at odd unexpected times ; and as he began life with but little, he sometimes after a good week, as he called it, was as rich as he ever had been. When he sold out, his uncle, Lord Falconberg, was very angry, and vowed he never would forgive him. In a month he was at Hawkestone Castle, taking all the trouble off his uncle's hands, and replacing Hawkestone, who was doing duty with the regiment of which he had washed his hands. It's very wrong of the world, but there's not a hard-working clergyman with ten children, who falls into debt and misery, whom his creditors fail to assail as a spendthrift and an idler ; while, if Harold Falcon had come to grief, there's not a man would have lodged a detainer against him. He always conciliated the one with the money that belonged to another. George never owed a shilling, was as exemplary in his college life as he had been elsewhere, and had lived on his whist and *Vingt et un* among men who were only amusing themselves by losing. Both were tall, and looked like gentlemen. George was pale, subdued, blue-eyed, light, and straight-haired. Harold was dark-eyed, open, laughter-loving, and handsome as the day. Their pursuits were different, and their tastes, and minds. George was slow but industrious. Harold was quick, idle, impulsive, and far the cleverer of the two. They were not fond of one another, which is not to be wondered at. Active dislike wasn't in the nature of Harold ; the extent of his hostility was borrowing money, and it gave him more pleasure to get it out of George than anyone else.

Just now George Falcon had another grievance against Harold. He was unable to divest his mind of the idea that his cousin was endeavouring to supplant him with Peggy Jansen. For, although he would have been glad to be relieved of an amour which was likely to give him incredible anxiety and to end in expense if not exposure, he was so happily gifted with a contrariety of disposition, that he would have hated the man who should relieve him of his trouble, if he took the innocent cause of it with him. It was a personal offence to fall in love with the same woman, when it ought to be regarded as the most delicate flattery. A man at the antipodes has surely a right to worship the sun, though all the time that luminary may be shining only upon you. Perhaps if George Falcon had known Bernhard Jansen and his relations with his cousin and his set, he would have been quite as much disposed to attribute Harold's visits to the right cause; for he had a firm belief in the superiority of money over women, as an attraction.

But strange to say, Harold had seen and talked to Peggy Jansen; and, although his debts and difficulties had given him no time for falling in love, he had often thought that he had never seen so attractive a woman in his life. He delighted in her large, confiding blue eyes, and long lashes, the luxuriant gold of her hair, the pretty simple smile which she wore habitually, and her clear complexion, so delicate but so indicative of health. Love under such circumstances never entered his head; for it was rather much to say for a man like Harold, who led the free and easy life which he did, and who had not been brought up in the strictest school of propriety, that deliberate seduction was not amongst his vices. Admiration he had often felt and expressed to others of the money-lender's daughter; and for marriage he could only have looked to a class, which, with all his good looks, in his present state of decadence, would possibly have over-looked him.



CHAPTER VIII.

WHO RIDES THE ROVER?

TIME went steadily on, with Harold Falcon more quietly than usual; for having all sorts of bills out at all sorts of dates, it very seldom happened that there was not some pleasant anticipation to quicken the flagging hours. One acceptance for a thousand at six months, and another for six hundred at nine, makes three fourths of the year go uncommonly fast; and as Christmas approaches the fourth quarter follows suit, bringing with it those reminiscences which are never so agreeable as when accompanied by a favourable balance at your banker's. Harold was sometimes dull, when he wondered what was to be the end of a career, which seemed already to have arrived, and the end of the world, as far as he was concerned, to be resisted only by Bernhard Jansen and the bill-discounters. But he was never impatient; for he always reflected that in a short time he should certainly want all that he was anxious to get rid of now.

His Cousin George had left Oxford, so that he saw little of him. He was gone somewhere to Scotland, or on the continent, whither he didn't know. Somebody had his address at Hawkestone, but nobody seemed to know it. However, it wasn't wanted. His usual residence was in London; he found it handy for the clubs and Tattersall's, and he kept up an intimacy with his own brother officers. When he liked he went to Hawkestone Castle, where they were all glad to see him; none more than his cousin

Lady Helen, who was now permanently at home, as the mistress of her father's household. Lord Hawkestone too had just retired, for his health was not so good as it had been, and neither London nor Windsor agreed with him. Of the three younger ones, one was still at Eton, one was at Woolwich, and the other was reading with a tutor preparatory to ordination in the neighbourhood of the Castle. It was a pleasant house, generally full of company; and Lady Helen herself not the least agreeable of its inmates. There was a great intimacy between her and Harold; just the sort of intimacy which might have ripened into a warmer attachment, or which might have existed all their lives long between cousins, and defied the most censorious.

One thing rather militated against this Platonic assumption, and that was the fascinations of the Lady Helen Falcon. She was one of the handsomest girls in England, with a dignity of manner and address toned down by the most natural grace. She had acquired in Paris (where she had spent a season or two with a distant relative, and one of the most highly-bred women in France) that extreme ease and polish, which is as far removed on the one hand from our national hauteur as it is from a freedom of manner and speech erroneously attributed to our neighbours. She was of a fair complexion, with hazel eyes and dark lashes, her hair was a light brown, beautifully soft and luxuriant, her nose and mouth faultless in shape, not too small to give character to her face, with a certain strength and self-government which was indicated by a somewhat *prononcé* but handsomely-shaped chin. The old gossips of Hawkestone never could understand how two such very handsome people could come together so often without falling in love; as if there were more gravitation in beauty than in ugliness; for it's all owing to the laws of gravitation after all.

It was the week before Easter; a few people were in town—not many—and Harold Falcon was among them. On the steps of a small house next door to what is now the Wellington, but which was then Crockford's, Lord Borodaile was sunning himself, while waiting for his horses.

'Hallo, Prendergast, where are you going?'

'To Dick Carruthers', to inquire after the Rover. There was a report at the club this morning that he wasn't all right.'

'Then wait a minute, old fellow, and you'll know all about it: here comes Harold Falcon. He's his principal supporter. He's coming by Herries' now. I know him at any distance. He looks as if he ought to have twenty thousand a-year. I wish he had.'

'Talking of that, they say Hawkestone's very ill—at least in very bad health.'

'I'm afraid you are travelling a long way for the twenty thousand. The old peer has four sons, and the three last are as strong as cart-horses, and take as much care of themselves as a half-bred'un through diet. And Hawkestone has the influenza, that's all. Well, Harold, tell us the news.'

'News? Coronation's sure to win the Derby; and they're going to insist upon residence, and some strong measures of ecclesiastical reform, after the recess. Perhaps my cousin will give up his prospects in the Church,' replied Harold in a tone of great good-humour, as if he never had a care; and if that Jamaica-coloured insurrectionist sits behind such a horseman as Harold he must have a very hard time of it over a country.'

'Then you'd better go in for the family living,' said Lord Borodaile.

'They might make some unpleasant remarks about his care for the dead ones,' said Prendergast.

'No—I've no wish to emulate our friend, the Montgomeryshire handicapper, who was so tickled with his performances on two or three occasions, that he got his son made coroner for the county. At present I'm in search of the odds about the Rover,' replied Harold.

'The very horse we were talking of. It's all right, I suppose — because they were talking treason at the club.'

'Were they? then you go and back him right royally,' said Harold.

'Where are you going to look for the odds, Falcon?'

'At Long's; there's half the university in London; and it's difficult to know whether they are only reckless, or whether they are really as ignorant as they affect to

be.' This sounds almost like an anachronism for our own time.

'And who has Carruthers got to ride him?' said Prendergast, referring to the subject once more after a pause.

'I believe that man McPulham — I don't like him much.'

'Not a good horseman?' inquired Lord Borodaile.

'Too good,' said the other; 'he can stop them when he likes.'

'Is McPulham a gentleman?'

'So he says—at all events he's a gentleman-rider.'

'Does he get anything now for riding?' said Prendergast.'

'He says not. He's only put on so much to nothing, which answers the same purpose if he wins. When he loses I don't know what he does. They say he looks out for himself, and leaves his backers to settle it among themselves.'

'You stand a lot of money on the horse, don't you, Falcon? Why don't you insist upon riding yourself?'

'He's not my horse, and Carruthers knows McPulham can ride him well enough if he likes—better than I can. Besides, they heard me lay four thousand against him.'

'But they know you've taken seven.'

'You do; so does Borodaile. So do half-a-dozen more, and I hope Cranston hasn't forgotten it. But there are hundreds who don't, and if the horse made a mistake, and he's never made one yet, I believe, you know what a nice set they are. The layers of fifteen sovereigns to five would pull you off your horse, while the losers of thousands would take the earliest opportunity of inquiring whether 'the horse is meant to-day?' There are men who don't conceive it possible for a horse to lose a race when they have backed him, and who have gone on the turf with a full assurance that there's not an honest man, but themselves, belonging to it. The only reason these fellows are not rogues is that they have not brains enough for the business.' Saying which, and shaking an adieu with his glove to his friends, he took his way to Dick Carruthers' house in Piccadilly.

The truth is that Harold Falcon was not quite satisfied with the jockey who was to ride the Rover; and as a

question of about four thousand pounds depended upon his success, he thought it advisable to look after the business himself. Carruthers he knew could have no object in risking his reputation for a dead loss, for he knew that he at least had backed his horse honestly. But Dick was surrounded unhappily by such a very unscrupulous lot that they would not hesitate to sacrifice him if it would serve their purpose.

McPulham's own character was pretty well known. He was a very superior horseman, perhaps the best in Ireland—over a country which may be taken to include England. But if his horsemanship was Hibernian, so was his position in society. In Ireland he was a gentleman for two purposes—to ride against and to fight; and it probably was accorded him from the great love of sporting and fighting, which at that period distinguished that gem of the sea. In England, but for this spurious reputation, he would have been allowed to claim the position on neither grounds; for his associates were trainers and jockeys, and his manners and conversation belonged to the training-ground and the stable yard. What his family might have been it would have been needless to inquire; he had no ostensible means of living but that which he derived by his *sobriquet* of *gentleman-rider*; and if his father had been really a gentleman, he was most assuredly the last of the family who had any pretension to the name.





CHAPTER IX.

THE PARTY AT THE HOLT.

THE recess was over, and there was but one meeting before the Derby, and that was Waterpark. It was one of those which had been established some years before, when Waterpark was a small spa, the support of one physician and two livery-stable keepers. Eventually it became fashionable; and, from sallow-cheeked Indians with dried livers, and over-fed, cart-bred carriage horses, it rejoiced, as a winter residence, in hard-riding bachelors, officers on leave, and offshoots from Oxford and Cambridge, who, from some unknown causes, preferred to spend their vacation at Waterpark. As regards these latter, the place assumed the position of the Calais or Boulogne of bankruptcy; and there wasn't a scapegrace who had been rusticated, or who wanted to keep three horses instead of one, who didn't persuade his friends that Waterpark was good for his health. A pack of hounds, of which one killed and two or three disabled every day was a moderate computation, gave rise to so much competition, among the visitors, that the master suggested an annual steeplechase, of which he was the great patron, and to which he liberally subscribed. Whether he found this cheaper in the end or not, I can't say; possibly not; it was only cutting the ditch at one end with the view of filling it up at the other; but it produced a meeting at the conclusion of the hunting season, which had then become one of the most fashionable among the provincials, and has since become one of the most important in the kingdom.

The Holt was full; and one week before the races, the men most interested in their success, those who had horses, and those who had bets, and those whose vocation it is to wander about from country-house to country-house, tame cats, *raconteurs*, gentleman-jockeys, black squires, and *bon vivants*, had assembled in sufficient quantities at Dick Carruthers' hospitable board. It was the great house of Waterpark. There was nothing within ten miles of the place as good, and on occasions like the present it was always open.

If any man is curious about the individual company, I refer him to the *Morning Post*, or the *Waterpark Gazette*, a well-paying emanation from the literary talent of the neighbourhood, and the defunct *Satirist*, in which the peculiarities of more than one of the party were most unsparingly held up to ridicule. Those with whom we have to do in these pages, I shall endeavour to describe as far as may be necessary for our purpose.

I said the party was a large one, and it was a sporting one. The occupations of the party not being those of the Archbishop of Canterbury, it must not appear strange that their conversation was different from that of His Grace and the Bench of Bishops; although I know that to make people talk as they do talk is not by any means the shortest road to popularity. There's nothing so flattering to others as to make your puppets talk about things they don't understand. To meet a fool even in a book should be an implied compliment to somebody.

There were twenty people at dinner. Lord Chesterton, a quiet gentlemanly person, holding office as the master of the buckhounds, was explaining the necessity and difficulty of keeping the Conservative party together, and complaining of the inefficient registration as compared with that of the large towns.

'They have sprung up so wonderfully of late years that it requires very little management on their part to swamp the counties,' said Lord Chesterton, who, to tell the truth, was rather anxious to get rid of the extremely horsey conversation which took the place of every remark. 'If they could but get the right men. There seems always a difficulty about that.'

'They should get a foxhunter or two among them, my

lord,' said a Captain Childers—who went by the name of Flying Childers—an Oxfordshire man.

'The foxhunters belong to us, I fancy, to a man,' replied Lord Chesterton.

'Then let 'em try the stag,' returned the Flying Captain, amid a roar of laughter, who, however excellent to hounds, was not blessed with quite the same knowledge of men as of country.

'I hope, Dick, I've said nothing——'

'Nothing in the world, Childers,' said the host. 'Chesterton is unfortunately situated, and obliged to keep a pack of staghounds for his sins.'

'Nonsense, Cranstone,' shouted some one, 'don't be unruly. The horse can win: nobody will lay more than three to one at all events. McPulham knows he can win.'

'Faith, Sir Harry, I know nothing of the sort. I know he will if my riding can make him. Zitella's a good animal, I believe, but I never saw her go.'

'They think it's reduced to a match. What will anyone lay against Cupid?' The inquiry was made by a fast cornet of cavalry.

'I'll lay you seven hundred to one,' replied the Irishman, at once pulling out a book, which seemed as well fitted to the tails of a dress-coat as to the side-pocket of a frock. 'I'll do it in fifties or hundreds.'

The cornet received a gentle kick under the table, which he had brains enough to acknowledge by holding his tongue.

'What are likely really to go for it?' said Harold Falcon at last, waking up from an apparent dream: for the conversation had got, at one end of the table, so thoroughly into the groove that it was impossible to get it out.

'Five or six at least, Captain Falcon,' replied McPulham. 'Be dad! I'm glad to hear the captain's not going to be one of 'em.' This was not addressed to Harold, but was said loud enough for him to hear. 'It 'ud change the odds anyhow.'

Now Falcon disliked this implied flattery, and how little like the *bonhomme* of the true Irish gentleman it was, many of our readers know.

'Who'll go to the ball on Friday? Cranstone, you'll go: and Chesterton: Falcon, are balls in your way?'

'I'll go with great pleasure, though I'm better in the saddle than on my feet, since my accident.' He had met with one to his foot some time back.

'We'll all go: those that can't act the bear can look like the jackass,' suggested Tom Reynolds, who was allowed some latitude in vulgarity, on the strength of being considered a wit. He was only an author. Chesterton stared, and Dick Carruthers asked if anyone would take any more claret. As everyone declined, he desired Falcon to help himself to the sherry, and send it round. 'Some that my grandfather imported when he was ambassador at Madrid.'

'Then, be dad! we'll drink the ould boy's health,' exclaimed McPulham, who had already done so. 'I'm glad he left his sherry behind him. What say you, my lord?' Saying which McPulham helped himself, and pushed the bottle to Lord Cranstone, who sat near him. The company looked up, and Carruthers thought it time to retire.

It had been remarked that Lord Cranstone, who was usually a talkative person, and singularly agreeable in society, had scarcely spoken. He had made one remark only on the subject of the horses, and had then relapsed into an almost monosyllabic conversation with his neighbour. 'Cranstone, old fellow,' said Lord Borodaile, 'you're not up to the mark.'

'Bit of a headache. What sort of a night is it?' And Cranstone went out to see.

It was the custom at the Holt, being indeed a custom much honoured in the observance, to retire for the evening to the billiard-room, where men could smoke without that offence to others, of which we are not ignorant since the railway controversy has brought it prominently forward. It is undoubtedly true that, with a feeling of perfect independence, men would light a cigar in the breakfast room, or the library, or stand five minutes smoking in any part of the house, so much latitude has always been given or taken in such houses; but men of the world never tread on their neighbours' toes, whether they hurt them or not; so, by tacit consent, there was a billiard-room to which they usually resorted. Thus it happened

on the night in question, that at least two-thirds of the party had retreated thither, after running their eyes over the morning papers. The room was warm, as indeed were some of the disquisitions on the coming opera : were we to have Rubini and Grisi again? and were Lablache and Tambarini to be forthcoming from Paris? on the Derby horses, and the four-in-hand club, D'Orsay's hog-maned cab-horse, and Sambo Sutton and the Oxford Pet, with half-a-dozen other subjects about as intellectual.

In the middle of it all, leaving it unsettled whether Tony Fosbroke ran away with Lady Elizabeth Bouncibel, or she with him, and whether Joe Tollitt was a better light-weight coachman than Jack Bramble, Harold Falcon found the room a little hot. It was accidental on his part, not being usually observant of temperature, or of anything else which affected only his physique. To-night, however, it was different, and he sought refuge in the hall, when he wondered whether Black Diamond was like what he was represented to be, and whether the fox-hounds, which were jumping up on the clean leathers of a former Richard Carruthers, left no mark. The scarlet coats and resplendent waistcoats of Anne, and the Jacobite heroes of George I. and II., did nothing towards cooling our hero ; so he walked into a large conservatory, which opened upon the side of the hall farthest from the billiard-room, and had an egress at the other end upon the lawn and towards the shrubberies.

Harold continued to smoke his cigar as he thought over his chances of winning a few thousands on the steeplechase, which would be something more than useful to him just now ; and in a rather more contemplative mood than usual, he sat himself down at the foot of one of the large orange-trees, where he could feel the cooling night-breeze which entered by a window left purposely open for the hardening of some of the plants. Harold Falcon's knowledge of the premises enabled him to find his way to this seat even in the dark.

He had not sat there many minutes when voices, as of men speaking loudly, but not suspicious of eaves-droppers, fell upon his ear. He was scarcely conscious at first of what they were saying ; and when he was so, he was

about to move away, when he heard something which it was not in his power to avoid listening to.

'He can be stopped only in our part of the course, in the hollow. Nobody comes down there, and if it's to be done at all, it must be done there.' The voice, or rather the accent, was unmistakable. It was McPulham.

The reply came slowly, and after a moment's consideration. 'The horse's pace is well known here; he can give the mare a stone at least, I hear, and a beating. The only doubt is his refusing. Since I laid against him, they say he has much improved; but with that peculiarity of temper, I think a horseman can have no difficulty in making him turn.' Harold did not recognise the speaker. 'Nor in making him jump, I suppose,' said the other. 'Faith, it takes only a little more money.' 'I think there need be no question of that between us,' saying which the speakers both moved on.

There could be no doubt on Harold Falcon's mind as to the subject of this fragment of conversation. No horse could be meant but the Rover, and no race but the one in which he was interested, as it was the only steeplechase of the meeting. If any uncertainty could have existed, the voice of McPulham as one of the speakers would have cleared that up. Now who was the other?

Harold Falcon walked straight through the conservatory, across the hall, and into the billiard-room, whence he had retreated some ten minutes before. He was not much cooler, it must be admitted. He looked round the room, and he saw that about half-a-dozen of the company were absent. Lord Borodaile was gone to bed, Lord Chesterton was smoking, Childers was—nobody knew where, and McPulham and Lord Cranstone were the other absentees. Of course a time does come when the most inveterate smokers and billiard-players must go to bed, and at the Holt it came at last.

'Carruthers,' said Harold, with a face full of anxiety, 'let's have five words with you.'

'Certainly. Come into my room; bring your cigar, you can finish it there. Why, Harold, you look as if you had seen a ghost.'

'I wish I had. What I've seen is more material.'

And then he related to his host what he had heard. Dick looked quite incredulous.

‘Are you sure, Falcon? I know you’re not a likely man to make a mistake, but are you sure? because you know, old fellow, this is rather a serious charge.’

‘Against McPulham, it is so; but I shall not shrink from the responsibility.’

‘And who was the other? You must have some sort of suspicion.’

‘I don’t know, Dick, and I’d rather not have any suspicions; at all events, it won’t do to state them.’

‘And what do you want me to do about the horse? He’s a first-rate jockey; and you know I’ve backed him heavily myself.’

‘He mustn’t ride—he can’t ride—at least among English gentlemen, and you must stop him. This is one of those cases in which it’s your duty, as well as interest, to interfere.’

‘What am I to do with a man who came all the way from Ireland to ride for me? Because after all, Harold, it is but one man’s word against another’s. What excuse can I make to get rid of the man? Cranstone’s the only man that’s taken him up at all, and that must be mere civility, for he’d rather see him dead than riding the Rover.’

‘I don’t know.’ And a very curious expression passed over Harold’s face. ‘Will you let me ride the horse myself?’

‘But what am I to do with the other fellow? He’ll want to fight.’

‘Then let me have the fighting too. Anything’s better than a row on the turf; it gets us all a bad name. I’ll manage the Irishman; and as to fighting, there’s only one man in the house could or need fight him after what I’ve heard to-night, if he were twenty Irishmen. Leave it to me.’ With which Harold Falcon took his candle and his leave, and went to bed.



CHAPTER X.

A GENTLEMAN-RIDER WITHOUT A MOUNT.

I THINK there's a story of a friend of mine which redounds more to his credit as a wit than an honest man. He had been guilty of that unpardonable offence in the eyes of rich men, of not paying his debts, when he was detected in the equally unpardonable offence in the eyes of ardent sportsmen of sleeping long into the day when he ought to have been starting for cover. 'I can't think,' said his friend rather irascibly, 'how a fellow who owes so much money can sleep at all : you've only got twenty minutes to dress and breakfast.' 'I can't think,' replied the unfeeling sluggard, 'how the fellows to whom I owe it can sleep at all :' saying which he tumbled into his bath, and wasn't drowned.

Now I don't know how an Irish gentleman about to commit a public robbery (for I hear that race-horses belong to you and me, just as much as to the persons who buy them and feed them, which seems rather odd) usually sleeps ; but on the morning after the previous conversation he was still enjoying apparently peaceful slumber, when a servant brought him a note.

The note was from Harold Falcon ; and simply asked for the honour of an interview of a few minutes, if possible, before Mr. McPulham left his room. Having no suspicion of the motive which had prompted the request, it was readily granted : and in ten minutes' time Harold was admitted, while McPulham performed certain duties of his toilet. At the moment of our hero's arrival he

was engaged in removing the crop of superfluous stubble which one night had raised upon his lip and chin : for those were times when to have ridden a race in a beard would have called down the unequivocal ridicule of the English spectators. A chimney-pot hat under the same circumstances would have been less reprehensible.

Harold apologised, and was about to beat a retreat.

Mr. McPulham begged the captain wouldn't mention it : as he wanted to see him before breakfast, he hoped he wouldn't object, &c., &c., with those natural explanations which might have been expected on either side.

'Unfortunately,' said the captain, 'my business admits of no delay. You were to have ridden the Rover in the steeplechase to-morrow.'

'I presume,' said the jockey, turning suddenly round with one half of his face lather and the other crimson, 'you mean to say I am to ride the Rover to-morrow.'

'Certainly, unless I can persuade you to relinquish your claim on Mr. Carruthers.'

'Hardly, Captain Falcon. Faith ! is it in favour of yourself that I'd be asked to do so ? I've money on the race, Sir.'

'And I too : and unless you wish to lose it, I should recommend you to trust the Rover to me, Mr. McPulham.'

McPulham turned from the glass in which he was affecting to shave, for he had been much too nervous from the beginning of the colloquy to do much in that way, and deliberately faced the speaker, placing his razor upon the dressing-table, but forgetting to remove the remains of either soap or beard.

'Will you do me the favour to explain that language, Captain Falcon ?'

'It would give me pain to be obliged to do so, Mr. McPulham : but if you have forgotten the conversation into which you entered last night I shall be compelled to prompt your memory.'

'Pray, Sir, did Mr. Carruthers send you here to insult me ? because an Irish gentleman has but one answer to such insinuations.' And McPulham sat down or leant against the foot of his bed, and folding his arms waited for Harold's reply.

'Insinuations might warrant that language and attitude; but I have to prefer a direct charge against you of an intention to pull or stop in some way or other the Rover. Hear me out, Sir, if you please,' said Harold, as the other rose from the bed prepared to deny it. 'You may imagine whether I shall rest in insinuations when I tell you that I was in the conservatory when you were standing outside of it last night: and the windows were open.'

'And were you the only person with talent or dishonesty enough to invent this precious story?' for McPulham had quite brains enough to know that one man's word is as good as another practically, if not morally.

'Two persons, Sir, were auditors of your conversation: we know in what part of the course your intended fraud was to have been practised, and it shall be frustrated.' McPulham had lost all courage and all colour, and sat gloomily and sulkily upon the bed. However, it was necessary to say something.

'That's not language, Sir, to address to an Irish gentleman.'

'It never would have been addressed to a gentleman of any country, Sir,' replied Harold, whose natural prejudice was increased to an unwonted extent by the confirmation of his suspicions. 'If Mr. Carruthers were to publish this morning what he knows of your conversation last night, there's not a man in the house would sit down to breakfast with you: and as to any countenance in a meeting to which your own language points, I don't know what may be the customs of your country, or for what purposes a man may be considered to rank as a gentleman: I can only tell you that in this, the less that is said of such a business the better. I shall be especially cautious in my remarks, and I can answer for the other recipient of your intentions not betraying you. I pledge you my honour for both of us: but my advice is that you retire as soon as possible: you may be quite certain that your apology will be accepted by Mr. Carruthers, and that a jockey will be found to supply your place for to-morrow—if not so accomplished a horseman, at least capable of winning on such a horse as the

Rover.' Saying which, with a very profound bow, Harold Falcon left Mr. McPulham to conclude an operation which had been delayed by so very unpleasant a communication.

McPulham took his breakfast in his own room. Business of importance took him to Ireland, and he trusted Carruthers would be able to find a substitute for him as a rider.

Harold informed Dick of the result of his interview, and gave him a pithy account of its details.

'And who was the other man who heard this scheme of robbery concocted?'

'Upon my honour, Dick, I wish you could tell me; that there was another besides me that heard it all, is undoubted; and he's just as great a scoundrel as the fellow who announces his intention of starting by the mail to-night for Ireland. However, we're well rid of the most active conspirator, and you've nothing now to do but to look after the horse. I'll do my part to win your money, you may depend upon it.' Saying which Harold turned short round, and walked off to the stables, while Dick Carruthers admired the ingenuity which had saved him a vast amount of trouble, to say nothing of the prospect of a heavy loss in pocket and reputation. Harold Falcon was disposed to regard his successful deceit as an ingenious device for saving his own.

In an hour or two they went to the races; it was the first day, and though the company usually reserved itself for the steeplechases, which was a sport then neither so common nor in so bad odour as since, there was a very handsome show of the county aristocracy, of the visitors, and of the racing community present. Amongst the first were conspicuous the occupants of Dick Carruthers' drag, which came on to the course with a form and character unapproachable in the present day, excepting by some half dozen of those noblemen and gentlemen who have brought with them an art learnt before the Stokers and Pokers were all-powerful. Charles Tyrwhitt Jones was then on the road, and Sir J. Vincent Cotton was on the Age. Sir Henry Peyton drove his piebalds, and John Spicer his grays. Lord Chesterfield, George Payne, Mr. Villebois, Major Macgennis, the late Duke of Beaufort,

and many more (whose mantles have descended on a chosen few, the present duke, Captains Bastard and Cooper, Baillie, and Lord Poulett, and another Sir Henry Peyton), had brought to perfection one of the most beautiful of our national amusements. So on the course, among the well-appointed drags, and exactly opposite the grand stand, Harold Falcon drew up Dick Carruthers' team, a delight to the admiring crowd.

On the opposite side we have said was the grand stand. To those forming their notions of a stand from that of Ascot or Goodwood, of Epsom or Doncaster, it would have appeared homely; to the magnates of the county, to the manager, clerk, and handicapper, to the town council and the race-committee, the building in question was magnificent. Nothing seemed to be wanting. Having ascended the stairs, and paid your money, on the right was a private door leading to a room devoted to the stewards and their friends. From thence, through the open windows, they were enabled to address their acquaintances below, on the lawn, or to take the odds, which they were ever ready to do, offered in the modest tones of the ring-men, since then grown into a body, leviathan all over; leviathan in lungs, numbers, impudence, and estate.

Next to this was a longer stand, in which the beauty and elegance of the aristocracy and the visitors loved to sun itself. The gaping rustics from the course, and the betting-men, jockeys, gents, and linendrapers, stared with unabated curiosity at the silks, satins, ringlets, flowers, feathers and bonnets of the ladies: while they paraded themselves in light straps and badly fitting white-duck trowsers, cut-a-way coats, and four-and-ninepenny gossamers, futile imitations of the well-made clothes of their betters. But then you see we have known since then the happiness of an approaching equality: and the blessings of free-trade and the rights of man have enabled us all to dress pretty much alike; and all like blackguards. As, moreover, it was felt that there was a great distinction between the accredited swells of the county and any mere waifs and strays of Waterpark-life, this stand was barred to all but those who were prepared with a steward's ticket, price one guinea, instead

of half that amount, and granted by voucher from the stewards, or master of the hounds.

The rest of the building was occupied by that mighty majority known as nobody, and by the payment of their half-guineas and crowns, adding mightily to the funds of the race-committee and to the respectability of the meeting. There was too a vast crowd of some thirty thousand vagabonds, who have since laid siege to government for votes, and whom Mr. Lowe recommends to pay a sufficient rental to get them. They enjoyed themselves very much, having arrived from a sort of black country in the neighbourhood, and taking pleasure in the racing as a make-shift for their favourite sport of cocking. The magistrates, driven by the legislature, or the legislature by the magistrates, had lately launched their thunderbolts against this; and as they couldn't make them learned, were determined to make them virtuous against their will.

In the first of these places, the stewards' seat, were the Duke of Chessingham, Admiral Target, Lord Chesshampton, Sir Samuel Corduroy, and a dozen others, with the master of the Waterpark hounds, and one of the members for the county. They were all gentlemen of good repute, honest, upright sportsmen: anxious for the integrity of the sport they professed to enjoy. The Duke of Chessingham had a great name, a vast estate, all of which he spent, and something more, having race-horses, and a pack of foxhounds, a yacht, three large houses, and some extravagant sons. The admiral was the very stay and backbone of racing, the terror of evil-doers, the best handicapper in England, and one of the most unflinching denouncers of rascality wherever and whenever it came under his eye. As to Lord Chesshampton, his life was passed in the business of the turf.

He had but four thousand a-year, and had five-and-forty horses in training. Lived upon it? of course he did; what in the world else was he to live on? He couldn't sweep the crossing at Limmer's—indeed that enviable *pied à terre* was occupied by a black man with a wooden leg, whose gains, however considerable, were dependent on regular work: while Lord Chesshampton's gains were

said rather to depend upon regular play. But there they all were, and no man but a sceptic could doubt that their first object was the improvement of the breed of horses; an object which unfortunately up to this time they have never accomplished.

It was a very pleasant day; the racing was good, the people happy, and Mr. Flimsey, the manager and clerk of the course, in his very best form. The glossy splendour of his toilet, the venerable roll of his hat, almost episcopal, the suavity of his manner, and the liberty of his conscience in favour of his friends' horses, left nothing to be desired. Everything was there, even to the dog, which occasionally appears on the course now, especially on Derby days. This year—Hermit's year—it was a black one.

Harold Falcon had won a hundred or two: but his mind had been singularly occupied in thinking of McPulham and his associate: who was he?

'What's become of McPulham, Dick?' inquired one or two, when they found him not on the coach.

'Business in Ireland. He's gone off to town to catch the night-mail to Holyhead.' It will be remembered that we are not writing of railroad days.

'Then he can't ride the Rover to-morrow. Who are you going to put up?'

'Harold Falcon's going to ride him.'

'He'll sell you, Dick—he's laid three thousand to one against him.'

'And taken seven. I think I can trust Harold if I can anybody.' And he certainly could. In the mean time Harold had a strong suspicion, but had no means of verifying it.

They were just leaving the course, when, in the crowd leaving the stand, Lord Cranstone and Harold were wedged together close to the Duke of Chessingham.

'Have you done any good to-day, Cranstone?' said the duke.

'Lost like the devil, duke. I've gone against the favourites, and they've done nothing but win all day.'

'So they will nine times out of ten, if they're really backed. The British public is a very good judge. Who rides Dick Carruthers' horse to-morrow?'

‘McPulham, I believe,’ said Cranstone, with much coolness.

‘I think not,’ replied Harold. ‘I have the mount.’ He spoke loudly and pointedly, and watched the effect on Cranstone. It was electrical. Every particle of colour left his face for a minute, a stony look appeared in his large blue eyes, and then there returned his usual confident smile, as he said, ‘Nonsense, Falcon; what’s come of McPulham, then? he was asked here on purpose to ride—he came with you this morning?’ And the same blank look took possession of him again, as he remembered that he had not seen him at all on the course. Lord Cranstone himself had ridden a hack up an hour before the time, as he wanted to get on something, and did not feel disposed to wait for the drag.

‘No; he went to London this morning; and he’s not likely to return.’ By which time they were down stairs. One went to the drag, the other to look for his hack, and the former knew who the partner in the conspiracy had been. But Falcon held his tongue, and watched him.

The fact is that his vigilance was thrown away. First of all, the honesty of Carruthers’ servants was unimpeachable. Excepting by some manœuvre beyond Cranstone’s unaided powers, the horse was quite safe. Beyond this, Cranstones’ real opinion was that the horse could not win. He had laid against him long before; and, not satisfied with that, had backed Zitella. He had met with a ready tool or confederate by accident in Mr. McPulham, and had endeavoured to make assurance doubly sure: his great fear was that he might have been detected. He saw no signs of that in the conduct of any of the party, and was persuaded that the Irishman was gone on some unexpected business, quite unconnected with the race.

Harold Falcon kept his suspicions to himself. As to Dick Carruthers, having got rid of the man who was likely to do him any injury, he was satisfied: and being perfectly comfortable in the hands of his friend Falcon, he gave himself no further anxiety on the subject.



CHAPTER XI.

THE RACE.

THE old-fashioned steeplechase of fifty years ago was so totally different from those of modern times, that I must devote a few lines to an explanation of the steps by which it had reached its peculiar form at Waterpark, and which was but a type of its present perfections.

There was a time, and men may regard it as akin to the golden age, when a certain number of enthusiastic foxhunters, having had a bad day's sport, and having nothing to do with an odd ten-pound note (which in the miserable slang of these days would be called a 'tenner'), determined upon a pure trial of nerve and horseflesh on their road home. A steeple is by no means an unimportant object even in a hunting country; and the natural one to which a man's hopes turn, metaphorically or literally, as a landmark, when no other is in view. The notion that any particular compliment to the Church was implied is a mistake, due possibly to the ritualistic proclivities of a Spurgeon or a Cumming, or some other great man. Hence the word steeplechase, which has remained in vogue long after the explanation of the most zealous respondent to 'Notes and Queries' has died out, does not by any means shadow forth the Church as the object of its pursuers.

The next step towards pure laicism was the summary rejection of the steeple altogether; and a start for any well-known point, as the flag on the top of a hill, or the

conservatory of a conspicuous gentleman's seat. Until in more degenerate times, finding that disputes arose as to who first jumped on to the lawn or into the water-butt, or who went up a lane or opened a gate, and who did not, it was decided to mark out by flags what might be considered a real course, leaving the riders to go as close to, or as far from, the line of demarcation, on the right or the left, as they pleased : only stipulating that the money would go to the gentleman who first reached the goal.

It was admitted on all hands that the fun, the money, and the honour was confined to the riders, or nearly so, and that if anybody came to grief, nobody saw it. It was a happy time, however, of exemption from gate-money and too obtrusive swindling. It remained now for the inhabitants of Waterpark to inaugurate a steeplechase, which should combine the dangers of a natural country with the comforts of an artificial spectacle. It was the very beginning of the cut-and-dried Liverpool, Leamington, and Croydon pattern ; and which have themselves become modifications of Market Harborough to suit the capacity of the performers. I am a man of progress ; I believe a two-year-old for five furlongs, with six stone on its back, is the true step towards the improvement of the thoroughbred horse for general purposes ; I wear everything but a beard, an all-round collar, and a wide-awake ; I believe in the British artisan ; I adore a chignon when made of the lady's own hair and made up at a first-rate purveyor's ; but I do not believe in the utility of the modern steeplechase course to give quickness, nerve, or knowledge of country to our horsemen. When we once enclosed in posts and rails the limits of the course, and sat in judgment over the rotten banks of a brook, and the too stiff timber of a double post and rails, we reduced one-half or two-thirds the courage, the quickness of observation, the judgment, and the true intelligence of our jockeys. The pace is different, the horse is different, and the man is different. The man who can ride fast enough and well enough sometimes to win on a beaten course, where he knows the fences and the ground, would have no chance over a country which he has never seen with the men who used to find their way over Leicestershire on Clasher and Clinker.

‘How’s the horse this morning, Stevens?’ said Harold Falcon on the day of the race, wandering out after breakfast towards the box.

‘Bright as a star, captain. Would you like to see him?’ and the two went in and found him nibbling a handful of oats that had been thrown in to him.

The Rover was a large good-looking horse, thoroughbred; for which, by-the-way, he had to give an allowance of seven pounds to all the half-bred ones in the race—the onus of proving them thoroughbred lying with the opponent, if they were not in the stud-book. He was a dark chestnut, with one white leg behind. His head and neck were handsome and set on for pulling. Falcon said he gave you a nice feel of the former, some said he carried his rider in his mouth. His shoulders were thick, but well laid back, so as to give his quarters a great appearance of height and length. His thighs were large, and his hocks fine and clean, but very broad; and he had plenty of length. He did not look very good-tempered, but, to say that he wanted a little riding, is all that his worst enemies could allege to his disadvantage.

‘At three o’clock that afternoon Harold Falcon took his gallop, preliminary to the steeplechase on the Waterpark course. He was the beau-ideal of a gentleman-jockey; which name I use in the absence of a better. His colours were green, with gold belt and black cap; his neckcloth was white, his breeches were just sufficiently roomy to give him ease in his seat, and his long straight legs were clothed in tops as white and closely fitting as if they had been made upon the trees. A gentleman on a racecourse in brown tops did not belong to the golden age of steeplechasing.

‘How do you like the look of him, Cranstone?’ said Lord Chesterton.

‘I never liked his shoulders: look at the mare, how well she moves; he gives seven pounds to her and the Emperor.’ But though Lord Cranstone spoke cheerfully he had a very anxious look.

‘And he’s able to do it,’ said Childers: ‘look at his shoulders; besides, he’s a thoroughbred one, and if they come to difficulties it’s a guinea to a shilling on the horse.’

'I can't agree with you; and as to his shoulders, they're the very point I should complain of.' But Lord Cranstone knew nothing of shoulders until he sat upon them.

'Why, Carruthers, what's this—this thing in black, coming now? I thought there were but three going for it;' and Lord Cranstone leant down from the drag to speak to his friend. He was pale and nervous, but this new appearance had a cheering effect upon him.

'Why, it's the horse they've just made a favourite in the ring at three to one,' replied Carruthers. 'I don't understand it.'

'Who's that on him—isn't it Oliver?' asked the other.

'Yes. I understand it now; it's Pullaway, with Tom Oliver on him. They said they couldn't run him because P. wouldn't ride him. I see it all now; they've put up Tom Oliver, and given the seven pounds' allowance. He's not thoroughbred, so he and my horse run at even weights.' Cranstone's excitement grew painful, as the chances in his favour increased, and Dick Carruthers looked proportionately sulky. The most perfectly unmoved person of the lot was Harold Falcon.

They were walking up to take their places—the race beginning and ending at the grand stand. 'Here, Dick,' said Harold. 'I know this horse has a little temper; I can feel it in him. Have you any orders to give?'

'Yes; win my money for me, and don't kill the horse.' And as this was an answer highly characteristic of the owner, Harold determined upon fulfilling it to the letter, if he could. In another minute they were 'Off.'

Pullaway took the lead, Tom Oliver in his black jacket was over the first fence—a stiff flight of rails well in advance—sitting on his horse and holding him as if in a vice. The other three came on in a ruck, all of them getting safely over the first fences without a mistake. The Emperor appeared a little overpaced; and Zitella and the Rover went on side by side, ten lengths behind the black jacket. Harold was right about the Rover. He soon found that he liked his own way, which was to the front; but Pullaway continued his lead at such a pace that Harold doubted the policy of running up to him.

He was right. They had been going a mile, when, by delicate handling, the horse became more tractable; and as Harold and he became better acquainted, he ceased to fight, and laid himself out to gallop. At the same time Pullaway began to come back to him, while Zitella was pulled back. They were now about a mile from the start, and nothing very formidable had yet presented itself in the way of fencing.

At this turn of the course they began to descend, and it was seen that they would be lost to the sight of the crowd on the stand, excepting to those quite on the top of it. By the number of people who had assembled at the next fence, it was evident to Harold that it was a rasper. Tom Oliver too, was of the same opinion, as he took a pull at his horse, and allowed the Rover to come within a couple of lengths of him. Zitella and her rider were not equally impressed with so obvious an act of prudence, and shooting forward came heavily against a second rail: the advantages of pace were made manifest by the manner in which she divided the timber, landing into the plough without further accident than a severe stumble; Emperor took advantage of the hole she had made for him; and the Rover and Pullaway, better handled, jumped it handsomely, and went on with the running.

They were now out of the course, and their line for the next mile and a half was only marked by flags, which were to be kept on the left-hand of each. Two consummate horsemen like Oliver and Harold Falcon were not likely to select such ground as the present for racing, and seeing the nature of the next meadows, which were low and marshy, they both rode with additional care. The rider of Zitella, with a laudable anxiety to be first some part of the race, took up the running; and having the best of the weights, made his way over the water-meadows down to the brook. Here as usual a crowd had assembled, and but that the more formidable piece of water was to be jumped in sight of the stand, probably the population of Waterpark and its vicinity would have been present to see the fun.

The first at it was Zitella; a little pumped, she slipped round, and her example was ignominiously followed by

the Rover, while Pullaway and the Emperor got safely over. In another minute Harold was again on the same side as his opponent, but twenty lengths behind, while Zitella had not joined them. The next field was sound grass-land, ascending again into what might be called the course, and about a mile a half from home. Here Harold made play, taking advantage of his horse's breeding; and upon coming into the course over a bound fence with the ditch from him, he was again within three lengths of Pullaway. The Emperor was here disposed of, though he continued to fence well throughout. The pace was too good for him; and as they came on over the fences, without a mistake, the shouts of 'Pullaway' reached the ears of the riders from the stand.

And now the artificial brook was being neared at every stride; fourteen feet of water, but conveniently made with a low fence bent over it on the taking-off side. On they came, Tom Oliver still leading, who landed his horse handsomely, while three lengths behind him the Rover followed suit. Both were still hard held, neither of them yet riding. The intervening fences before the run-in were not difficult, and Pullaway, with perhaps the best horseman in England, certainly the strongest, on him, continued his lead. Harold felt his horse; he had still enough in him to run home, if Pullaway could do no more, and it might still be a neck and neck affair. Tom Oliver looked round somewhat confidently, when Harold, thinking his time was come, caught his horse by the head, and with a determination which astonished the Rover, began to run up to his opponent. The shouts increased, as now at his girths they came along the course, one single flight of hurdles alone remaining. Side by side they were jumped, and as they landed, there still remained one half-length between them. Already they were opposite the stand, Pullaway with his head and shoulders still in front, when, within two lengths of the winning-post, by a rush that would have done credit to Chifney, Harold Falcon let his horse out, and amidst an excitement that had never been seen in Waterpark before, made a 'dead-heat' of the race of the meeting.

The scene that ensued lives in the memory of those who saw it. Of course both parties abused the judge;

that understands itself, as the Germans say. The Rovers and the Pullaways both claimed the victory, and both appealed to the stewards. If those august persons do little for the honour that is thrust upon them, they at least serve to decide such a point as the present. The judge's fiat must be respected; and as neither party was satisfied, it only remained to run off the dead-heat at five o'clock the same afternoon.

Cranstone was flushed and excited, though reassured by the confident assertions that Tom Oliver could not lose on a beaten horse.

'Why didn't Harold come sooner?' said one.

'Tom Oliver was caught napping for once in his life,' said another.

Those who knew nothing of the mistake at the water wondered how he ever let Tom Oliver get away from him. Everybody knew better than the riders themselves.

The Duke of Chessingham thought he had never seen a finer bit of riding, but laid three to two pretty freely after the race against the Rover. Harold took it to a hundred without giving his reasons, which rather encouraged Dick Carruthers and his party. Sir Samuel Corduroy went to look at the horses, and fancied Pullaway had everything taken out of him to do what he had done; and, said he, 'I think the thoroughbred one will come soonest round.'

'Admiral Gorget thought they ought to divide, and—'

'How about bets?'

'Put them together, and divide—there's no difficulty about that.'

'They won't divide now,' said Lord Keswick: 'there's Falcon backing himself; and three to two has put them all on their mettle.'

The ladies were especially enthusiastic about Harold; and the duchess thought it would serve the duke right if he lost his money. As Harold walked out of the weighing-room, with a thick pea-jacket over his colours, he met with a perfect ovation from the crowd. Tom Oliver's face, too, looked a little anxious, though he said nothing. He thought it was no odds either way.

The other races passed off without comment. The people evidently were intent upon the coming contest.

It was to come off in two hours, and there were three races to be decided before that time. Nobody looked at them with their usual anticipation of pleasure; they were but so many steps to the accomplishment of a much more interesting affair.

At last the Rover and Pullaway came out. You could scarcely have told that they had been out before. There was no preliminary canter, and they were started at once—both inclined to wait. At length Pullaway took the lead by a length, and went on with the running as before. This time there were no refusals, and the only thing to be remarked was that the pace was moderated. When they emerged from the heavy lands once more into sight, they were both being ridden well and judiciously—neither meant to throw a chance away. About a mile from home they began to increase the pace; at the brook they were side by side, and both got over cleverly, Pullaway dropping his hind legs a little, when two-thirds of the course were passed. Cranstone wrote a short note, which he sent over to the drag to apologise for going unexpectedly to town. Before it reached its destination Harold Falcon had won a good race by a length—cleverly.





CHAPTER XII.

HOW TO PAY A DEBT OF HONOUR WITHOUT MONEY.

THERE could be no doubt that when Harold Falcon woke the next morning, notwithstanding his natural and acquired indifference to impecuniosity, he was much more comfortable in his mind than he had been lately. When a man is really living from hand to mouth, with the exception of some bare pittance, a windfall of four thousand pounds is worth a consideration; and is apt to brighten the horizon of futurity, at least for a time to come. It was so with Harold. Not that he regarded it as possibly many of my readers might have done. To a man reared as a gentleman, who really sees himself within one hundred pounds of the workhouse; who knows that another month must take him out of his comfortable home into a sponging-house or a debtor's prison; that he has on a coat, waistcoat, and trowsers which are to last for ever, or until they be exchanged for a shroud; that has no hope in race-horses, or relatives—such a windfall as four thousand pounds sounds like eternal water in the desert to the dying traveller, the Pool of Siloam to the incurable leper. It must not be supposed that this was the case with Harold Falcon. He didn't even look at its prospective advantages, as an end, but only as a means for accomplishing still greater ends. If my friends and publishers, Messrs. —, were to offer me such unheard-of remuneration for this or any future efforts—and no man can say what they may do—I should think it my duty to purchase some railway debentures, limited lia-

bility discount partnership, monster hotel shares, or other permanent and secure investment. Such was not Harold's view of the matter at all. He lay in bed thinking only how he might most profitably invest a certain portion in the coming Derby, and wondering whether the hints about Mr. Rawlinson's horse and Lord Chesterfield's mare were to be relied on. He gave a thought to old Jansen, determining that the old money-lender should have his score cleared off as soon as possible; and rejoiced in thinking that he had done with him, at all events till the next time. Harold knew what it was to win money, occasionally, and more frequently to lose it; but four thousand pounds was a haul, which he had not effected lately.

It was the second day after the steeplechase; and Falcon was still at the Holt. He came down stairs with more even than his usual good-humour. On his way down he met with Dick Carruthers, who asked him when he wanted to go. 'I suppose you can stay a day or two longer?'

'Yes: I've nothing to do till settling day—let's see, this is Friday.'

'Yes. What do you win altogether?'

'A hundred or two on the Tuesday, a thousand from Spielman, and the difference between seven and four thousand on the steeplechase: the odds I laid you.'

'I'm glad of it. It served Cranstone right. I don't know what he lost, but he had two bad days I'm sure. He never would believe the horse could gallop.'

'I'm sorry for Cranstone myself,' replied Harold. 'He's had the worst luck consecutively I've ever heard of on the turf. I'd rather have won my seven thousand of any other man of my acquaintance. It will cost him ten to get it.'

'I hope he will get it, for your sake, Falcon.'

'So do I, for yours.' Saying which with a careless laugh they walked into the breakfast-room.

They found the greater number of those who had been spending the week at the Holt already at the table. They were reading the papers of the day before and the letters, which had just come over from Waterpark. 'Any news, Borodaile?' inquired Dick Carruthers.

'Yes. Mr. Hall, the sitting magistrate at Bow Street, has locked up a certain Mr. Johnson for thrashing a policeman, and offers it as his opinion that he is a marquis of sporting celebrity much too fond of disturbing the peace of the Haymarket. He declines accepting a fine. Pleasant for Johnson.'

'Very—he'll get rid of his connection with the aristocracy as quickly as possible, I should think. But the Haymarket must be a good deal altered if there's any peace in it to disturb,' said Childers.

'Who is Johnson, I wonder?' said Carruthers.

'A quiet man in the Fifteenth, who happens to be very like W—d, and has only been in two rows in his life. They fined him very heavily once before for his unfortunate resemblance.'

'Here's a man been shot in a duel; and the principal and seconds are gone to Boulogne.'

'Who is he?' inquired Sir Harry Trenchard.

'It doesn't say. The man who shot him was a linen-draper's apprentice.'

'It's about time gentlemen gave up killing one another then,' said Lord Chesterton, who opened the door just as the passage was read from the newspaper.

'Or themselves,' said Lord Borodaile, who suddenly dropped the paper into his plate, and fell back in his chair. 'Good God, how horrible! Poor Cranstone.'

The man next to Lord Borodaile picked up the paper, and happening to be less intimately acquainted with him than the former, was able to read a short paragraph from the *Times*, while the rest of Dick Carruthers' guests heard him with the most painful astonishment.

The paper announced that Lord Cranstone had posted up to town on Wednesday evening from Waterpark—that he had gone to bed as was supposed upon reaching his house in Mayfair; and that on his non-appearance the following day, his valet had broken open his bed-room door. Lord Cranstone was found sitting in his arm-chair quite dead, and a phial which was still in his hand left no doubt that he had destroyed himself with prussic acid. His betting-book was open by his side, and his undoubted losses were the clue to the motive for the rash act.

This was the substance of the *Times'* report, and there

were at least three or four present who had no reason to doubt its correctness.

Harold Falcon was a man of considerable self-possession; but it would have required a stoic indeed to have seen his newly-formed hopes dashed to the ground without a pang. He changed colour, but never made a remark, and not a soul looked at him, though some there must have guessed his feelings. In the general exclamations, queries, regrets, doubts (for some were expressed), and surmises, Harold Falcon got up and left the room. It was a curious fact that, notwithstanding his own ruin, for it really was so comparatively, he smiled to himself at the chance remark he had made to Dick Carruthers. As to that worthy, he was quite acute enough to know that his money would be forthcoming somehow or other, and much too selfish to dream of offering accommodation, which he guessed must be taken.

Harold retired to his own room. He sat down and wiped his brow, on which a cold perspiration had broken out. Then he looked in the glass, and was surprised to see that his face had recovered neither its wonted colour nor serenity. His hands and limbs trembled, at present, and he poured some cold water into his basin and held his hands and face in it for a few minutes. After a time he began to realise the facts of his position. He was no better off than before, and he owed his friend Dick Carruthers four thousand pounds into the bargain. He had no means of getting it; and he had a very great reluctance to be in Dick's debt. He was one of those sanguine persons who never hesitated to run the risk of repaying five hundred with about sixty per cent., out of an income of two or three hundred a-year and contingencies; but he shrank from the responsibility of thousands. It really was a heavy obligation for a dependent and very extravagant ex-guardsmen.

Presently he rang the bell.

'Send my servant here, and ask Mr. Carruthers to allow me the use of a hack this morning.' And Mr. Carruthers' man hurried off.

'Now, Pearson, pack my things up, and go into Waterpark this afternoon. Be at the "Regent" at four o'clock, and take two places by the mail. We shall be in London

late, but I can dine at the club, while you get my rooms ready.'

And Pearson, as invaluable as all poor men's servants are, whether from the hope of better times, or that they are urged by a sort of compassion to happier exertions, set about his task at once.

'Mind that cap and the jacket,'—and it is rather remarkable that, while he felt fully impressed with the idea that they would not be wanted again, he was the more particular in his directions about them:—'and just run down and ask Stevens whether they can have a hack for me in a quarter of an hour. If the boy can be at the "Regent" at a quarter before four he shall bring it back, as I shall not return here.'

From Waterpark to Woodstock is a beautiful ride. A great part of it lies through fine park-like land, covered with magnificent timber, and presenting much variety of country. When Harold started, the first object was to reach Jansen's house in good time; but as the sun got up, and the light became more dazzling, he pulled his horse into a walk and let him move slowly through the shadow of the trees, which were just beginning to put forth their leaves. To admirers of physical beauty Harold Falcon thus presented a rare picture.

He was of more than middle height, thin, active, straight, but broad and flat in the shoulders, and showing limbs of much elegance and symmetry. He had dark hair and dark eyes, a straight line of soft wavy whisker, which shaded a rather pale oval cheek. His nose and mouth were sufficiently handsome, and the latter especially was adorned with a very fine set of teeth. His hair, which on either side appeared from beneath his hat, was dark and wavy. His dress was perfectly consonant with the fashion of the day. A loose riding coat with broad skirts and metal buttons, of a dark-green mixture, and bound with a black silk braid or binding; a pair of buckskin trowsers, fastened below his well-polished Wellington boots, completed the riding costume of a gentleman of the year 184—. He sat, when at a foot-pace, well back on his horse; and his reins, which were held in each hand nearly as far back as his hips, gave every liberty to his horse's head, as he walked along at four good miles in the hour.

His thoughts were sombre enough. To say they were not of himself and his own fortunes would not be true. No man faces poverty as he was doing without much pain, much anxiety; but while he thought of himself, he recurred frequently to the terrible fate of Lord Cranstone. It seems selfish enough to console yourself by the superior misery of your fellow-creatures, or to contrast favourably your own ills with their heavier misfortunes. But it gives a hopeful tone to a mind depressed to think others have borne, with patience and success, more than we. Yes, with patience—but where was Cranstone now? How long Harold had known him, all smiles, carelessness, indifference! the boon companion, never without money to throw away, never with enough to pay his debts. Where was he now? and who could guarantee him against a like fate? The tears almost came to his eyes as he looked back at what he had been, and forward to what he might be. If he had but money—but for money he never had had a care in his life. How many can echo Harold's sentiment! God only knows how many he might have had with it.

Lord Cranstone came of age a comparatively rich man. No pleasure was too extravagant, no luxury inaccessible. He lived in an age of bold rivalry; and the only means of competition was by gambling. He dissipated every shilling at Crockford's and on the turf. The Jews were tired at length of a doubtful sixty per cent., preferring a positive forty; unable to procure it, and indebted to his friends, who would have saved him, bad as he was, at four times the money, he destroyed himself. This he called honour—amongst other of honour's attributes, it's very short-sighted.



CHAPTER XIII.

WHERE HAROLD GOT THE MONEY TO PAY HIS DEBTS
OF HONOUR.

BERNHARD JANSEN was a man of peculiar manners as well as appearance, as the reader already knows. His displeasure with his wife and daughter, richly as it was merited, was not consistent, or firm, or judicious in any way. It was capricious, violent at times, and gloomy; and as apt to bestow itself upon the man's inner self as upon the offending persons.

When Harold Falcon presented himself at the house, Jansen was brooding gloomily over the disgrace, which his instinct told him would fall sooner or later upon his name. Had Harold had to select a time for his business, he would not have chosen this above all others, but he had no choice; time was pressing, and his name wanted saving as well as Jansen's.

Having given his hack to a boy in the old stable-yard, and bid him put a cloth over his loins, which he did by use of a couple of meal sacks, he walked unannounced into the presence of Mrs. Jansen. That lady was wholly unprepared for the visit, as might have been seen by her dress and occupation. She was assisting her domestic servant in the preparation of Herr Jansen's dinner, with her sleeves tucked up above the elbows, to give the freer use to her arm in wielding a rolling pin. A large apron, which came over her shoulders and chest, and descended to her feet, covered a dilapidated black silk dress.

Harold saw that he had made a mistake in his route,

and drew back at the door. 'Mr. Jansen, I was looking for—finding no servant and——'

Mrs. Jansen's sleeves were already down; but all her usual alacrity was gone. She was meek, humble, depressed, for this once, and only said,

'Captain Falcon, Mr. Jansen is in his room;' and thither he followed. For the first time in his life he saw traces of tears on the lady's face.

Jansen was hard at work—he had before him a fine piece of carving in design from part of the cathedral at Seville. He was attempting to copy its most difficult and remarkable details. Excessive difficulties soothe, if they do not calm, mental agitation. Jansen found it so now. He had had a violent paroxysm that day; he had converted it into gloom.

'Hallo, Jansen,' said Harold, ushered into the room by the wife, who however shut the door on him at once. 'Hard at work;' and then he took up a piece of very handsome carving, and began to expatiate on its beauties. For Harold could take high art of various kinds, and was not utterly ignorant of it. Many men were not ashamed of refinement thirty years ago; and it put Jansen usually in good humour. It wanted something more than high art now.

It was quite clear that Harold could not plunge at once into his necessities, which are not like a pair of good trowsers, but must be handled gently and tenderly, as having had many a patch, and in places utterly threadbare; amenable to the heel of a boot, or highly susceptible of tight straps and unprepared movements.

'That's a beautiful piece of work, Jansen, you're employed on now.' The artist looked up, but didn't reply. 'Your countrymen excel in it.'

'Do you think so, Captain Falcon? Gibbons was an Englishman. He did much in Chatsworth and Windsor. I knew nothing finer than the room at Petworth.'

'Gibbons was of Dutch extraction, Jansen, like yourself. Have you seen the foliage and flowers in the Chapel of Trinity, Oxford?' The mention rather jarred upon the old man, and he replied,

'I never go out. I've scarcely crossed the garden five

times in the last ten years ; and don't care if I never do again.'

'It's worth seeing, nevertheless,' said Harold, quite ignorant of the cause of his ill-humour.

'But you didn't come here to tell me that. If it's money, I don't see how I can help you.' And here Herr Jansen began again at his work.

'You've never failed me yet, Jansen ; but this is a heavier business. Somebody must help me, or I'm ruined.' And the tone of Harold's voice sounded so sadly and despondingly as he pronounced the last word, that Jansen looked up at him, and was surprised to see how unlike himself the captain was.

'Ruined ! I've never seen one of you gentlemen that wasn't ruined at one time or another. You never come here till you are. There are plenty would like to be ruined in the same way. Shall I tell you what ruin means, Captain Falcon?—three months' inconvenience, perhaps a renewal, a year or two in Paris or the north of Italy, and then the repentant prodigal, or the long-expected legacy. Isn't it so?' And Jansen continued his work.

'Not with me. Did you ever hear of Lord Cranstone ?'

'And of his death. He owes me a couple of hundred.'

'And me—seven thousand. It's all I had.' The old workman looked up.

'And now you're a beggar, do you say ? You're only where you were before ?'

'Worse ; I laid off four thousand of it,' replied Harold Falcon.

'And how much do you want ? Won't your creditor wait ?'

'I don't intend to ask him.'

'You must.'

'I'd rather follow Cranstone's example !' And perhaps for the moment so bitter was Harold's feeling of debasement that he half meant what he said.

'No, you mustn't do that. Go abroad.'

'What, run away ? that's as bad. Will you clear my book at Tattersall's, and give me a thousand to go with ?'

And Harold spoke with a mocking tone, as if the thing was out of the question.

‘What security have you to offer?’

‘Nothing—not even a father’s death to speculate upon. There’s a good old lady, Mrs. Falcon, my father’s aunt, who might leave me twenty thousand—who will do so when she dies.’

‘Nobody lends thousands on old women’s fancies. They’re very capricious.’

‘Well, I’ve nothing else, Jansen, I’ve told you, but my allowance; at present it pays my cabs and my tailor. Henceforth, I must live on it.’

‘Can’t you get me a joint name, a good name?’

‘What! for four thousand or thereabouts—*par exemple*, very likely. Besides, why should I rob my friend?’

‘Drowning men catch at straws.’

‘Right enough, but then they do the straws no mischief.’

‘Do you see no plank?’

‘None that would save me; plenty that I could swamp, if they would swim with me.’

‘Would you insure your life for four thousand, Captain Falcon?’

‘You’re afraid of me, then?’

‘No, I’m not afraid of you; but would you do it?’

‘I would, and pay the premium as long as I could.’

‘And what would you do with four thousand pounds?’

‘I’d pay up on Monday, and go abroad with the remainder. But I don’t see what that matters to you unless you mean to lend it.’

‘You would go abroad?’

‘I would do anything to escape from this position. Will you help me? As I am in your debt, I am bound to listen to your advice, even if I do not take it.’ For with all his careless good-humour, Harold had reached a point whence he could see nothing but misery. Anything but application to his uncle, who had already done so much for him.

Jansen hesitated a moment, and then, weighing his words well, said,—

‘You would do anything? marriage?’

'For money? be it so: a wrinkled old woman, or a hideous young one?'

'Neither. A few thousands, it is true; beauty wonderful, youth, accomplishments. Your family (have you one? I think not) objects. Go from the church-door abroad; and when the good old aunt is gone, the world will worship you and your wife, as long as the twenty thousand lasts.'

In all his disappointment, Harold Falcon could not help laughing at this curious proposal so quietly made. So he said in reply, 'And who's the lady?'

'Come and let us look for her,' said Jansen. And as the giant rose from his seat with a grave and mysterious look, Harold Falcon felt himself compelled to follow this Dutch Mephistopheles; which he did with a mind more ill at ease than ever.

A quarter of an hour or thereabouts had elapsed, when Harold Falcon opened the door of the farm-house and passed out. He was followed by Bernhard Jansen. Neither spoke, and the former strode on towards the stables. He was deadly pale; his features worked with suppressed emotions, the most marked of which was the determination which kept the whole in subjection. His hat was drawn closely over his eyes; and in passing the windows of the house he kept them firmly fixed upon the ground. The boy who had before thrown the sacks over his horse's loins led him out, and having brushed out the wisps of hay which clung to his mane, held the stirrup for the captain to mount.

'You'll not forget the arrangement, Captain Falcon?' said Jansen, speaking for the first time, and with more respect in his manner than usual.

'The bargain, you mean, Jansen; call it by its right name;' with which unpromising speech Harold rode slowly out of the yard, and across the pleasure, or dismantled park, in which the artist's house stood.

It was not the road, nor even quite the direction, in which he wished to go; but his horse took the grass by preference (a very unusual thing with horses) and wandered on, the reins lying idly on his neck, and the rider's thoughts travelling anywhere but on his way.

He crossed the park diagonally, and so absorbed was Harold in his own thoughts, that, until his horse stood still at a stone wall in the corner, by which there was no egress, he had not discovered his mistake. Being thus brought up by a regular Oxfordshire wall, of at least four feet high, his first impression was bewilderment as to how he got there; the second a perception that he could not reach his destination without getting out or going round. At any other time, fine horseman though he was, he would certainly have preferred the latter course, as he was not a man to risk his own neck or his friend's hack by hazardous larking. On the contrary now: having collected himself sufficiently to perceive that the road to Waterpark would be hit by a cross-country ride to the right, and not feeling by any means disposed to return by the yard through which he had come, he drew back his horse about forty or fifty yards, and gathered him together with a light hand but determined grip. He rode him slowly at the wall, the first thirty yards at a trot from which he broke into a slow canter; but the hack refused, and turned away to the right. As the wall was too high to jump at a stand he was obliged to let him come round. Then he compressed his lips, and the second attempt was successful. Increasing his pace a little, and bringing his horse so steadily up to it as to give him no room to turn, he found himself obliged to jump, and the two landed safely on the other side. Then Harold's blood began to stir within him, and crossing the next pasture and jumping the fence, holding his horse in a fair hand-gallop from field to field, and getting safely over the obstacles as they presented themselves, he struck the road to Waterpark over a stiffly bound fence with the ditch beyond, in his stride. As he landed safely and pulled up, his colour had returned, and he patted the hack approvingly. His gloom was partly gone, and his mind made up for action. 'I made my bed; I must lie on it. It's a hard one, but it might have been worse, or such as Cranstone's. I'll not turn back now. Besides, it's the only loophole. Come up.' Such was the effect of his ride.

At a quarter before four he rode into Waterpark, and alighting at the 'Regent,' he threw his rein to the boy

who had been sent from the Holt for the hack, and sauntered into the hotel.

'The coach would be through in ten minutes' time,' said the landlady, 'and she knew Captain Falcon's servant had booked two places. Captain Falcon was not looking well; would he take anything?' Captain Falcon ordered a pint of sherry, and sat down in the coffee-room.

'Waiter.' The waiter said, 'Yessir,' all in one word, as waiters will, and continued giving change to another waiter at the farther end of the room. Having finished his own business, he slipped a napkin under his arm and asked Harold what he pleased to want.

'Is the mail always punctual?'

'Very, Sir, very. Leastways I bin here five-and-twenty year, and I never knowed it late but once, that was in a snowdrift.'

Having reassured himself he rose from his table, and paced the coffee-room; every two or three minutes he looked out of the window.

His impatience was remarkable, and the delay intolerable. But the coach was pretty punctual notwithstanding; and having taken only two minutes and a half to change horses, and put Harold's luggage into the boot, he got up in front and his servant behind, and they started for London with fifty miles to be done by nine o'clock. With the team they drove there was not much doubt about their doing it.

When Harold Falcon had made himself comfortable he turned suddenly round and encountered the face of an acquaintance, nothing more. He had met him at Oxford once or twice, and lately dined with him at the Holt. It was Beauchamp.

They exchanged greetings, and began a promising conversation, which developed itself by degrees from the weather, racing, bribery, Macadam, field-preaching, and such general topics to something domestic or social.

'Have you seen my Cousin George, lately?' inquired Falcon.

'No, I haven't,' said the other with a very startled and puzzled look, a look which seemed to say, 'that's a very curious question to have asked.' 'No, I haven't.'

'Do you know where he is?' said the other very inno-

cently, but looking equally astonished at his neighbour ; and wondering why he should hesitate, as he appeared to do, to answer a simple question.

‘Where he is?’ repeated Beauchamp, as if pausing and weighing the words before he returned answer, ‘what don’t you know——’

‘Of course I don’t,’ replied Falcon, who was somewhat impatient at getting no direct answer. ‘Of course I don’t—that’s why I asked you.’

‘Don’t you know what they say? I was going to ask you.’

‘I can’t say that I do ; but if you’ll tell me I shall be much obliged.’

‘Well, they do say—mind I don’t myself know that it is so ; but they do say that he’s gone off with Jansen’s daughter, and that your uncle is furious, as of course he naturally would be.’

‘I know that he isn’t gone off with Jansen’s daughter, and of course my uncle is not so furious as he might be. Just give me a light—thanks.’ And from that time, till they reached London, when it was dark and cold, Falcon did not say much more.





CHAPTER XIV.

HAROLD'S OTHER COUSIN.

CF course in those days there was no such thing as a Saturday half-holiday. It would naturally have been asked for what clerks and apprentices were meant. The notion of saving a material which did not really belong to the employer, which, like all machinery, was meant to be worn out, and which in the increase of population was sure to be renewed, never entered the philanthropist's head. The consequence of this was that there was no difficulty in transacting business on the last day of the week any more than on the first among the Jews.

In pursuance, therefore, of his plans, Harold Falcon walked down St. James's-street, and crossing over Pall-mall next door to what was afterwards the Guard's Club, walked into Hammersley's and presented a check.

It was for a large amount, and the clerk to whom it was presented, after a few minutes' absence and consultation with the senior of his department, disappeared into a room at the back of the bank.

'Would you be good enough to look at that?' said the man to the junior partner, who was sitting at a desk, running through figures with a most alarming alacrity. This extreme facility was a remarkable gift of one gentleman in that calling, and had acquired for him the name of Three-fingered Jack, from the manner in which at one time he allowed his fingers to run down the three columns of pounds, shillings and pence, invariably finishing with a correct calculation.

'It's a large sum,' said the man in authority, looking up from his own calculations, and taking the document in his hand. 'Who presents it?'

'Captain Falcon, I believe, Sir, himself.'

'What, the Captain Falcon of the Guards. Lord Falconberg's nephew?'

'I think it is, Sir.'

'Ask him to do me the favour to walk in,' and Harold entered.

'Captain Falcon, will you take a chair for one moment?' which he did, and the junior partner rapidly finished his column and turned round.

'You want this money immediately—to-day?' inquired the banker.

'Immediately, if possible,' replied Harold.

'Will you forgive an impertinence from an old acquaintance of your uncle? Do you know the drawer of this check?'

'I do, and am much indebted to him.'

'Be less so, as soon as you can. We have not so much in our hands of his by a few hundreds, but may receive notice by the evening post, if not, on Monday.' Harold looked a little blank at this intelligence. 'However, if you really want it this morning, we will cash this check on your own undertaking.' The man who spoke was a very handsome man, with large flashing dark eyes, a look of great and fearless honesty, and massive but fine features. He looked like a man in whom anyone might confide. Harold felt half-inclined to do so, but recollected himself and said, 'I want to go abroad to-morrow, for some time, and I will give any necessary security that I can,' very much wondering what that might be.

'Then sign that, if you please. Mr. Johnson, be good enough to cash that check for Captain Falcon.'

He did so, and Harold Falcon left Pall-mall with a heavier pocket and lighter heart.

It was midday, and the streets were not full. A few late Treasury and Foreign-office clerks were on their way down Bond Street to their offices, having scarcely rid their eyes of the dust and champagne of Willis's rooms, or the then fashionable amusements of driving hackney

coaches or wrenching off door-knockers. At present however, it was early in the season, and full swing was not yet given to these entertainments. Vauxhall was not yet open, and the happy attractions of monster balloons, which swelled the attendance at that arrack-smelling, oil-bespattered tea-garden had yet to come. It was not till later in the season that twenty thousand people assembled to see a man go up accompanied by his parachute, to descend through two miles of atmosphere on his head, or to witness the pyrotechnic displays which set the gardens on fire and very nearly involved the Thames itself in the conflagration. So as Harold made his way up Bond Street, he did not meet so many of his friends as he might have done later in the day. Those whom he did meet were full of one subject; and that was their own.

‘Hallo, Falcon,’ said Marcus Crane, who was pulled up by a butcher’s cart as he attempted to cross Bruton Street, and which a free and enlightened British public allows to scatter its mud and its murders at the rate of sixteen miles an hour,—‘how are you? Isn’t this an awful business?’

‘Awful!’ said Harold, who had but one subject of meditation.

‘Why, if Lord John brings in this bill (they talk of only an eight pound franchise), we are utterly swamped in the counties; and some day or other, you mark my words, every fellow will be able to read and write, and labourers’ wages will be at fourteen shillings a-week!’

‘Good-bye,’ said Harold, hurrying on.

‘I say, Harold, this is a precious affair, isn’t it?’ This address came from a brother-officer, Charley Greystoke, who, having an interest in the turf, must have heard of Cranstone’s death. ‘The duke is out of his mind.’

‘What! his uncle—you don’t say so?’

‘Egad! I do though. He talks of a competitive examination for the army—and there’s my young Brother Reginald has been at Harrow this seven years. Never been anywhere else. How the d—l is he to know how to write and spell and all that sort of thing, you know?’

This was something like a complaint; but Harold had the bad taste to wring his friend’s hand, and pass on. Between that corner and Grosvenor Square he met three

or four more. Two congratulated him on his success with the Rover. One was in love with a new woman who had appeared in a velvet habit and on a chestnut horse somewhere, and who proved to be Caroline ; and a fourth offered him some members' tickets for the Zoological Gardens for 'to-morrow. I was there last Sunday and there was nobody in town.' Harold declined them rather bitterly and walked on.

He knocked at a door of a house in Grosvenor Square.

'Is Lord Hawkestone at home?'

The man hesitated.

'Yes, Sir, he is at home ; but not very well. I dare say he will see you, Sir, though he was not to be disturbed.'

'Then ask his lordship's man, Wrench ; and if not I'll call again in the afternoon.'

'His lordship will see you, Sir,' says Mr. Wrench, coming down stairs. 'The family is not in town, and my lord was breakfasting in his own room. Would you walk up, Sir?' and Harold ascended to the first floor and knocked at the door of the room at the back.

'Harold, I'm delighted to see you ;' and Lord Hawkestone welcomed his cousin very warmly.

'Your man seems to have more discretion than most people, Hawkestone. He told me you were not very well, but would perhaps see me.'

'Then I have to be grateful to him for speaking the truth—and now I do see you, you don't look well. What's the matter, Harold?'

'I might ask the same of you, if I were disposed to be curious,' said the other.

'Not much amiss. I caught cold on guard, and to tell you the truth I was rather upset by poor Cranstone's death. You know we were at Eton together, and though I had no great sympathy for his pursuits, still you can't see a fine fellow, one of the best of the order ten years ago, wrecked body and mind at his time of life without some regret ;' and as Lord Hawkestone spoke, his handsome light blue eyes and open honest face showed how good and sincere was his nature. There was a character and intelligence in his features so noble, so spiritual, that he never lost by comparison with his Cousin Harold in

physical beauty; although the latter attracted more by the lightness of his spirit, and the *insouciant* carelessness of his disposition.

They then talked about ordinary matters connected with Lord Cranstone's death, and the circumstances which led to it.

Lord Hawkestone spoke seriously enough on the subject; he was not a man to regard such a lesson lightly; and he knew well the growing spirit of gambling which clogged the best energies of many a man of his acquaintance, and which was wrecking noble hopes and aspirations for many an one. His own regiment was not free from the taint, as he knew; and he had striven to check it among the youngsters. He mourned silently over Harold's defection. He was certainly ignorant of the extent to which he had gone; but it was impossible to live in town on such intimate terms with him, even since he had left the army, without knowing how reckless and debased in his real nature he had become. He was the more alive to it because he loved Harold; he knew his father's liking for him, though he was not demonstrative; and he half suspected a tenderer feeling on the part of his sister Lady Helen. He was old enough to exercise some influence over him too; but not so much older than he as to take him to task, or to interfere in the arrangement of his affairs.

Again, though his nature and his heart had hardened and degenerated by that constant friction with absence of high and honourable motives, and by association with idle selfishness and self-gratification, Harold was still essentially a gentleman. No one could take a liberty with him. He was as honourable on the race-course as in the drawing-room. With all his debts and responsibilities, he had never been known to fail in his obligations; and money-lenders and bill-discounters, who are not unlike the devil in one thing, that they are not even as bad as they are painted, not only praised the captain, but were generally willing to accommodate him within reasonable limits; his present necessities were out of all reasonable limits, and but for the ready and mysterious aid afforded by the ex-professional Jansen, he could no longer have shown amongst his equals, and must have lived hence-

forth exiled and proscribed. And all because Cranstone had paid his debts of honour with prussic acid.

Now he was going to pay his debts, and then he would go into exile.

'Fred, I'm come to ask you to do me a favour.'

'I will if I can. Is it to give you room here? My father and Helen don't come up till the week after next. We shall have the house to ourselves.'

'No, no; nothing so pleasant;' and Harold looked serious. 'Are you likely to go to Tattersall's on Monday?'

'Certainly not, Harold,' and Lord Hawkestone laughed at the notion quietly; 'but if you want me to do so for you I will.'

'I came to you, Fred, because I cannot trust anyone so well as you to do the commission without talking about it; and you'll laugh, perhaps, but I am especially anxious that your father should not know it. If he must know my last escapade I should prefer it to come from you. I should have some mercy dealt out to me; at least by you and Helen.'

'Harold, are you sure you know your best friends, even in your scrapes? but come, what is it—what can I do?'

'Will you take charge of that,'—here Harold counted out just four thousand pounds,—'and pay it over to Captain Childers for Dick Carruthers? He's not coming himself, and Childers settles the half-dozen bets he has.'

'Do you mean, Harold, that you lost four thousand to Carruthers?'

'I am afraid I did.'

'And am I not to receive anything for you?'

'Nothing!' and as Harold Falcon thought of the cause he looked down.

'This must have caused you great inconvenience, Harold, or will do so. Why didn't you come to me, old fellow?'

'You couldn't have helped me, Fred; and I cannot trespass on you any further than I do now.'

'Are we not cousins, Harold?'

'We might be brothers, for all your father has done for us.'

'I wish we were, Harold. Wasn't poor Cranstone one of the party at the Holt?'

'He was.'

'They say he lost twelve thousand at the Waterpark meeting; seven on the steeplechase. Is it true? and if so, Harold, to whom?'

Harold was silent for a second, and said, 'To me, Fred. When I heard of the business I knew it must be true, and I felt as if I'd the poor fellow's blood upon my head. If he only had known how willingly I would have cancelled it. But, Hawkestone, take the money, that's a good fellow. Do me the last favour you can, for I leave England to-morrow. I'm not given to much sentiment, as you know; but this thing, what with the loss and what with its result, has been too much for me.'

Then Lord Hawkestone took the money, and put it in his pocket-book; and then he stood up in front of his Cousin Harold (he was rather the taller of the two) and took both of his hands in his. The contrast was very extraordinary, but very beautiful. Harold was dark and younger looking, and now appeared sad and humbled; not looking his cousin in the face. Hawkestone was fair, and bright, and open, but with a severe and earnest expression.

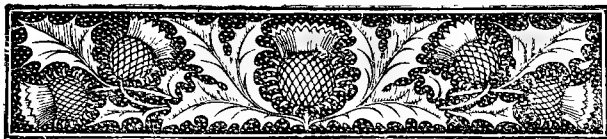
'I'm glad you came to me, Harold. I'll do your bidding, and you shall go abroad to-morrow, if you will. Now look at me, old fellow. If my father hears of this he will be grieved. He has been a kind friend to you, Harold, and will be again. Is there no return you can make him—nothing you can do for him and for us? Give up this life. You have left the Guards; I'm sorry for it. The service lost a good officer. But let us see if we cannot do something. The ministry owe us no little; and though we are slow at claiming it, they would scarcely resist the claim when made. I know if I have your word I shall be safe.'

'You have my word, Fred. When you see me again it shall not be as a professional gambler. I'll see what can be done. At present I'm going away; and by the time I return,' and Harold could not help smiling at his prophetic humour, 'you'll see that the turf will not be fit for a gentleman, and that he'd better be under than on it.'

'You're right, Harold. As a pleasure it has been the pursuit of gentlemen in mind and heart. There were plenty such when my father was young ; and the names associated with it show it abundantly ; but it was never their occupation. When a man begins to live by the turf he must resort to the measures of those who live with him. He must run false trials, stop horses, get them and keep them in the betting, for unworthy motives ; he must suborn touts, trainers, jockeys ; he must endeavour to delude everybody, and will end by deluding himself ; and thirty years hence he will do so. God bless you, Harold. Let's know where to direct to ; and when I can help you, don't think of me as a cousin but as a friend.'

Harold walked down stairs, and his hat was low down on his eyes when he passed out into the street.





CHAPTER XV.

ECONOMY.

FRAU JANSEN had done with intriguing ; and Peggy Jansen, who was home again, submitted in a half-sulky, half-frightened silence to the dictates of her father. In other words, she was confined to her room, where the poor girl wept in silence, and prayed for some deliverance from the capricious humours of an injudicious scold and the furious violence of an obstinate madman. It is not too much to say that Bernhard Jansen was really, or chose to appear, partially and fitfully insane.

It had never been impossible hitherto to evade these fits of ill-temper or violence by avoidance, or by superior malice, which was invariably assumed by Frau Jansen ; a sharp and shrill temper and voice dividing, and disposing of, the more substantial threats and bellowsings of her larger half, as a sharp rock or breakwater divides a tempestuous sea. Now, this remedy completely failed. Neither was he communicative, nor cared more for Mrs. Jansen's sarcasms, or temptations to talk, than he did for his daughter's tears. Nothing had disturbed this social suspense at the old farm but the arrival and departure of Harold Falcon. From the time of his visit, as we have seen it to take place, things had gone on better. Jansen had improved by becoming perfectly quiet, but invincibly obstinate. The frau was cheerful, but preferred to appear only resigned. The girl's virtue consisted in a forced hypocrisy, which was, however, confined to her own chamber, as heretofore.

‘Margaret, you are prepared to go with me to-morrow?’ said Bernhard Jansen on the day and about the time that Harold Falcon was going about London to see friends and provide for his journey on the morrow. He did this after his visit to Lord Hawkestone.

‘Yes, father,’ said the girl, dropping her hand listlessly, with her work, into her lap. ‘Am I going for long?’

‘That’s impossible for me to tell. Take what luggage you think most needful for immediate use. The best of your wardrobe; what trinkets you have; books that you care about—nothing more. We start from Oxford to-morrow morning, and in the evening shall be on board the boat.’

‘And you have made up your mind?’ rejoined the girl.

‘Thoroughly. No more, Margaret; remember your promise, the prize, and our word.’ With which Jansen, profoundly grave, left his daughter’s room.

It was a curious coincidence, at all events, that old Jansen and his daughter left England on the very day that we must lose sight of Harold Falcon for a time. One of the most comfortable assurances that can be held out to men of the world, that is, of Harold Falcon’s world, is the rapidity with which they and their affairs pass out of mind. We all of us trouble ourselves a great deal too much about what is thought of us, or will be thought of us, by those with whom we daily associate. We need be under little apprehension, when we are once gone, that it will require more than a given number of days to be forgotten. And that number is but small. Those to whom we owe money will probably remember us with some bitterness for a time; but unless we have been superlatively good or superlatively bad, the place we have occupied in the world’s opinion will soon be filled up by other objects—worthier because they are more tangible.

Harold Falcon, like all young men, judged that his absence would create some speculation, and it did. But when they had talked him over at Tattersall’s, at the clubs in which he was known, at Lady Mary Watt Knott’s—whose good-looking daughter had a lively recollection of Harold in Rotten Row,—and at a house or

two where he had made himself more than commonly agreeable, they let him go quietly down the stream ; and by the end of about three weeks, he might as well have never existed. He had paid his debts like a gentleman (as far as they knew), and that was more than could be said for everybody that disappeared from the surface of society.

'What's become of Harold Falcon, Jonas?'—Jonas being the nickname of a light-cavalry man about town of a very practical turn.

'Why? does he owe you any money?' says Jonas.

'No, not a farthing ; but I've not seen him about this season.'

'Where's that tall good-looking cousin of yours, Hawkestone, that used to ride?'

'He's abroad at present,' says my lord to Harold's friend, Greystone.

'What took him there at this time of year?'

'Nothing took him there ; but there was still less to keep him here, I suppose.'

'Devilish little to keep him anywhere,' muttered his quondam friend, grumpy at having made so little impression on Hawkestone, who was already several paces away from him, and talking to somebody else.

The people who really interested themselves about him were those who never knew him, but who thought it right to be interested about a ruined Guardsman, of any sort, as being on the confines of high life ; these were the would-be fashionables of commercial society. 'Two more gone, Jemima Anne,' remarks Barber of the Corn Exchange, sitting down to dinner, and helping his wife to soup : 'Cranstone's dead, destroyed himself ; lost forty thousand on the Waterpark steeplechase ; it's all in the paper : and that good-looking fellow, Falcon, bolted.'

'Who's he, dear?' inquires Jemima Anne, a matter-of-fact sort of woman.

'O, you know—was in the Guards—deuced handsome fellow.'

'What, a friend of yours, dear?'

'Well, not exactly a friend. I knew him quite well though,' he ought to have added, 'by sight,' but he

thought it scarcely worth while. 'I'm really very sorry for him, for he was a very good fellow, at least everybody says so.' Nobody had ever mentioned him to Barber that had even a bowing acquaintance with Harold.

The great world ought to be very much obliged by the interest which is taken in it by us little folk, if it did but know it.

When Lord Hawkestone walked down to Tattersall's with the money from Harold to settle his book, which was very easily done, he found the market very little depressed by Lord Cranstone's suicide. The few thousands due had been spread over a tolerably wide surface, and Harold Falcon was the only one who had lost much by him. The Jews had had so much of his money that they must have paid themselves over and over again.

'Captain Childers, were you looking for anyone in particular?' said Hawkestone, as he saw that worthy gentleman from Oxfordshire on the look-out.

'Well, for no one very particularly; but Carruthers asked me to arrange one or two of his bets for him, as I was obliged to come up, and he couldn't.' The Flying Childers was quite certain that Lord Hawkestone owed him nothing, nor he him.

'I think I can relieve your anxieties, if you have any;' and walking on one side he took the notes from his pocket-book, and counting them out, that there might be no suspicion of his personal interference in his cousin's affairs, said, 'Captain Falcon called upon me on Saturday, because he was about to leave London yesterday, and asked me to pay you this money for Carruthers; do me the favour to see that it's right.'

'Quite right,' said the Flyer, who was accustomed to deal with such matters, crumpling the notes up, and thrusting them carelessly into his left-hand trowsers pocket. 'I know Carruthers' account from my own by the pockets; I've given him the left and kept the other for my own. They're neither of them full yet:' saying which, he cancelled the bet in Carruthers' book. 'Did you say Falcon had left town yesterday?'

'I did; he intended to go, and I believe he went. He's gone on the continent for a short time.'

'Ah, I'm sorry for him. It was too bad of Cranstone.'

He ought to have paid first, and then nobody would have said anything about it.' By which Lord Hawkestone learnt that there were two ways of regarding the same thing. It seemed that Harold's sentiments and his own might be the right thing, but were not both in the right place at 'the Corner.'

After this Harold Falcon was soon forgotten by all but his cousin and his family. Lord Falconberg came to town and with him Lady Helen. One brother was at Woolwich, a good soldier, who had been put in there, as usual in those times, by favour. Another was at Eton, who could neither spell nor write English nor do the rule of three, but an excellent school-boy, and could make sapphics as fast as a little dog could trot. A third was waiting for ordination, a good man and having a call, as I verily believe, to the family living, twelve hundred a-year; and likely to make better use of it than if he had come a licentiate from St. Abeilles; a good Churchman, not as yet given to chasubles and incense, and not deep in Professor Maurice, nor Gladstone's Church Principles.

Lady Helen was a fine, frank, open-hearted girl, very handsome, of a beauty somewhat *prononcé*, as I said before, but with such kind and winning ways, that she mingled with her dignity a charm of manner perfectly irresistible. The impressions she produced were as variable as the temperature; and it was singular that everyone of her acquaintance had hit upon a different excellence by which he or she judged. Her intelligence, with which no man falls in love, delighted those who preferred rational conversation; and her sympathy and tact made her the especial favourite of the empty young heads that bobbed up and down nightly to the music of Weipart or König. Cornet Têteveau used to say, she was the only girl he ever cared a pin to dance with, for nobody else ever seemed to understand him, and he was sure he did not understand them. Her truth charmed the honest, her consideration the timid. She was as careful of a person's feelings as a well-bred horse is of stepping upon a fallen rider, and as independent and courageous in defence of her sex or her order, as a Knight Templar before Saladin at the Lake of Tiberias or at Acre; and her form and features were of a kind to

give the highest effect to every sentiment. Her eyes could flash with lustrous brilliancy, or smile with a soft subdued light through their drooping lashes. Her short and expressive lip curled with scorn of base actions, closed with determination, or showed the pearls between with that happy joyousness, which is the most infectious of all graces. Her sincerity was the distinguishing feature of her character and apparent throughout, but it was tempered with a forbearance which never permitted it to give offence.

Of course Lord Hawkestone heard from his cousin. As a matter of courtesy it was to be expected; as a matter of business it was necessary. He seldom talked about Harold—never to indifferent persons; only occasionally to his family. Lord Falconberg heard nothing, as it happened, about his nephew's escapades. He knew him to be generally extravagant, borrowing money and betting: but he had never heard of the extent to which Harold's unfortunate extravagancies had carried him.

He was very angry when he sold his commission, attributing it rather to a love of idleness, and a wanton vagabond sort of life on town and at Newmarket, than to its real cause—his necessities. And Harold Falcon had so few enemies, one might almost say so many friends, that though they wouldn't, or couldn't, save him from the Jews, they never gave him up to his uncle.

'Where is Harold now, Hawkestone; you know his address?' said Lord Falconberg at a dinner at his own house.

'I know his address, but I can't tell exactly where he is, for the banker at Innsbruck is only authorised to forward his letters. The last I had from him, he was walking through the Bavarian Highlands. He was then at Berchtesgarden, inspecting the König See, and fishing.' Here Lord Hawkestone stopped, thinking he had said enough.

'That's his view of economy. I've no doubt he spends as much there as he does here. He'd much better come back.'

'That can hardly be, my dear father. Here's Bertie Carteret saw him the other day, and says that he was

then at Salzburg, living like an anchorite. Bertie,' added he, 'what did you say he was doing?'

'He was living on half a-crown a day, and travelling on foot everywhere. I dined with him, and he was quite eloquent on the economy of the Tyrol. He says he often gets his breakfast for threepence. He catches his own trout, and has the cooking, coffee, and bread and butter for a few pence. I can easily believe it,' concluded Bertie; 'it's about its value.'

'You're not enthusiastic about scenery, I suppose, Mr. Carteret?' said Lady Helen, who listened to this account of Harold with some interest.

'Not when accompanied by stone floors and a plethora of veal. We got no other meat, and there was not a decent inn out of the beaten track, and not two in it.'

'How came you in the Tyrol so early?'

'I was coming home from Italy, and halted on my way at Salzburg. Finding Harold, I stopped; for he was quite alone—nobody there at this season.'

'How very strange it must seem to my cousin,' said Lady Helen, 'after living as he has done here for so long.'

'Very foolish of him,' said Lord Falconberg. 'Why doesn't he come home? there's plenty of room for him here. Write to him, my dear.'

'Not very foolish, papa; you must see his motive. If he has a hard school to go to, and a hard lesson to learn in it, it's all the better that he should do so now. Let him learn it thoroughly.'

'I should have thought you were the last person to have recommended that course, Helen. I'm sure you'd welcome Harold home——'

'I think Helen was right, Sir, nevertheless,' said Lord Hawkestone. 'Depend upon it he hasn't been so happy for years. Here he was always depending upon other people; there he will learn to depend upon himself.'

'And who's going to ride Crusader next winter, if Harold doesn't come down to Hawkestone?' inquired the peer with some asperity.

'Winter! oh, that's quite a different matter,' said Hawkestone; 'he'll be home in the autumn, I should think. If not, Helen will give you leave to send for him.'

‘Helen will do nothing of the kind,’ and she blushed. ‘Harold has to take care of himself; and he seems to me to have set about it at last. Don’t tempt him, Hawkestone, at present; the cure’s not radical.’

‘But it’s a serious matter for my father,’ replied Lord Hawkestone, laughing.

‘The best thing my father can do is to give him or get him some employment. Surely, with this ministry, we ought to be able to do something for him.’

‘Ah, that’s the difficulty, Nelly. Public business doesn’t keep men out of mischief. A fellow like Harold, whom everybody knows and likes, is sure to have a book full of caricatures, and blotting-paper covered with likenesses of his chief. They do nothing, and the chiefs do less.’

‘That’s a promising sketch of the executive at all events,’ said she.

‘It’s a true one, Lady Helen,’ says Bertie Carteret; ‘I know it all. We never do anything. We’ve a lot who came in on competition. They know everything—or say they do; but they’re really as useless, and far less ornamental, than those who belong to the ancient order of Her Majesty’s officials.’

‘Then, papa, I don’t think official life will do for Harold at all. You must make him your agent.’

‘That was meant for George, but he’s never been heard of since he took his degree,’ said Lord Falconberg. ‘Does anybody know where he is?’

‘He’s going to the colonies,’ said Carteret again; ‘he told me so the other day. He’s now at Gray’s Inn, but I saw him in the Temple.’

‘Which of the colonies is he going to?’ asked Hawkestone.

‘He didn’t say which; but I think Lord Falconberg had better give me the agency,’ replied Bertie, laughing at his own impudence.

‘You’ll find it harder work than drawing caricatures of your chief, Bertie,’ said the old lord, helping himself and passing the claret.

Bertie did not have the agency, but continued to caricature the ministers. He complained much that they were Whigs, as he wanted a change to try his hand on. And the summer went by, and the London season was

past, and Harold still remained abroad. His Cousin George went to the colonies for a time, having got a pretty good appointment. Goodwood was just over, and Lord Falconberg had a few visits to pay with his daughter. After that he meant to join Lord Hawkestone in Scotland, who was gone salmon fishing.





CHAPTER XVI.

HAROLD FALCON RECEIVES SOME INTELLIGENCE WHEN
HE LEAST EXPECTS IT.



WITH all the travelling which has taken place since the time of which I am speaking, very few people have visited the country in which Herr Jansen and his daughter were to be found some time after they had left England. The house in which they were living was a small cottage, comfortable to the last degree, for the country in which it was situated; accommodated with English furniture — carpets, curtains, and such matters—unknown even in the better class of houses at that period. It was situated between Cleves and Nimeguen, considerably removed from the high road, in a bit of country partaking of the sandy soil and tree-clad knolls of the former place. In itself it was pretty enough, surrounded by a small garden, and externally decorated with some of the rude attempts at carving which proclaimed Herr Jansen's taste and its own antiquity.

Margaret Jansen's was the same sad but beautiful face as we saw it a short time before in England. Her father's was disfigured just now with sullenness which was not natural to it, and to which his ordinary violence had given place. I have said before that it was a handsome face, but it must be marvellous beauty that is not disfigured by such a temper. His violence was not unbecoming to him as a matter of appearance.

Margaret was knitting. These German and Dutch women, and all who have affinity with them by blood or

habitude, will knit till your gall rises at the provoking monotony of their fingers. She sat back in an arm-chair, while her father stood before her in a denouncing attitude, one hand clasping an instrument of his art, the other a drawing, which he seemed to have been studying. The tears were coursing each other down the cheeks of his daughter.

'It's done, and it can't be undone,' said he, menacing her with his hand. 'You have not fulfilled your part of the contract. That you should have returned to your father's house from the church-door, so to speak, by your own folly and obstinacy, is more than I could believe, if I were not here to see it, and to hear you declare it.'

'I could not help it, father. I could not bear it. I knew why he was brought here, why I was brought here; and when I thought of it, the degradation and deceit was more than I could endure.' Her tears flowed afresh.

'You have become squeamish,' replied Jansen, satirically.

'Not till the last moment. But when he became generous: when he told me the truth, and gave me all back again that he might have taken, I could not withhold the truth, and I told him all.' The girl was half choked by her sobs, and could scarcely proceed.

'And he returned you to your home. Who can blame him? not I.' And then Bernhard Jansen looked long and more sadly at her. 'Margaret, if you knew how hard it is for a child to disappoint every hope, to probe every wound, to tear off the rags that hide, without healing, the cicatrice of a parent, you would not wonder at the revulsion of feeling that would put away the sight of what it once most loved. All my life long I have wanted sympathy. My fellow-workmen scarcely understood me when a boy: your mother was less careful of me than of my house; I looked to you, Peggy,'—and here Margaret got up and threw her arms round the huge old man, and leant her head upon his breast,—'I watched you, I indulged you, I listened to your wishes, I made money, or tried to do so, by unworthy means, for you. No one sympathised with my failures; and you cared nothing for my successes. You cared

for others ; for their smiles and approval. You loved admiration, and the world, and see what it has brought you ; and then when I would have done, have done all for you, to my shame and discredit you turn round upon me and thwart the scheme, on which you promised ready obedience.'

'My father, I tried to obey you—to keep my word—but I couldn't do it. He was too generous ; he spoke openly and honestly, and kindly, but not affectionately, and—and——'

'You told him—what? that you could not love him, nor live with him, that your heart——'

'No, father, I told him what was right to tell him, enough to bring me here again—where I may live with you, father, and with my mother ; and where I may see no more of the world's gew-gaws, nor look for more admiration or want more love than yours.' With which words she looked up into the eyes of old Bernhard Jansen, who could scarcely see her through the mist that covered them. Then, for the first time for many a long day, he took his daughter in his arms, and kissed her tenderly ; and putting her once more in her seat, he walked steadily out of the room.

From that day Peggy's indiscretions were forgiven, if not forgotten, by her father.

With regard to Harold Falcon himself, his friend Bertie Carteret had told nearly the truth. He was living the life of an anchorite, for him. It is only the life, however, which is led by thousands who can afford nothing better, but whose will it is to wander a certain number of weeks of every year at every possible inconvenience. He moved from place to place, carrying his knapsack, and sending his baggage by the great routes. There were no railroads then, and he trusted to the great Flemish horses, or the mules, or the Eilwagen, to supply him with occasional changes.

He could not have passed through a more sudden and incomprehensible difference, had he plunged from the heat of a vapour-bath into the baths at Chamouni, and they are the coldest I remember to have felt. He had in one fortnight dissipated an idle dream, which seemed as though it ought to last for ever, and exchanged for

a healthy, active, economical, and utterly useless existence, the refinements of high society, and the vices of luxury, idleness, selfishness, and dependence, amid which he was only saved from utter reprobation by the instincts of an English gentleman.

There he was, however, walking from mountain to mountain, living at whatever hotel, or auberge, presented itself; economising his scanty allowance, and—luxury of luxuries!—paying for what he had.

As the summer advanced, he began to be bored by the succession of visitors who poured into the *table d'hôtes*, and amongst whom he could not help meeting occasional friends, as in the case of Bertie Carteret. Harold had no great spirits to encounter loud acclamations of recognition from men who had forgotten his existence, till they saw him: and the pleasure of joining them had become questionable, the profit nil, when they talked of a rubber, devilled kidneys, and oceans of claret, as the purest luxuries of a continental life. Not that the exodus from this country at all resembled what it is now in quantity and quality, but there were adventurous spirits who thought the Swiss mountains were worth exploring, and who endeavoured to make English habits dominant among foreign materials.

It was very seldom indeed that Harold was induced to join any particular party of this kind for more than an hour or two. His great objection was the additional expense which he could not afford, and the determination to be independent in his movements. It must be admitted that after some days, perhaps hours, Harold's old associates would have found him duller than formerly. That peculiar elasticity of mind was gone. His debts and his difficulties had depressed his spirits, and made him think; a habit for which he had seldom had credit given to him, among the very liberal supplies of that article, which had been working his ruin. There were plenty of people, however, estimable people too, who would have preferred Harold as he was, to Harold as he had been; but these were of the steady kind, not given to devilled kidneys and oceans of claret.

It so happened that Harold Falcon had retired upon Munich, as a place in which he might winter. The

autumn was advancing : and what with the high road to Vienna, and to one of the Italian passes, it was a not impossible place for some amusement with its well-known economy. In those days, it was an admirable winter residence : and Harold Falcon was an admirer of art in all its forms.

He was at the *table d'hôte* of the principal hotel, having just taken a seat between a Russian officer and a Viennese dowager, when three Englishmen, one of whom he knew intimately, took their seats opposite to him. They were manifestly off a journey, and they were not long in telling Harold where they were come from.

'Oberammergau ?' repeated he, after one or two vain endeavours to repeat the word. 'And where is Oberammergau ? and what in the name of fortune took you there, Desmond ?'

'It's in the Bavarian Highlands,' replies Desmond ; 'and a wonderful place it is. Splendid scenery and rather out of the way, so that you won't like it. Accommodation not quite St. James's pattern. There's more beer in the place than curaçoa, and more tobacco than either.'

'I'm not frightened, if you'll only tell me where it is, and why I should go there.'

'The best way to reach it is by Starnberg, and from there, on the road to Innsbruck, you turn off in a magnificent valley—the valley of the Ammer. The village itself is enclosed by mountains and not easy of access, and would be a splendid shelter from persevering creditors.'

'If that's the only advantage, I think Munich is equally good.'

'Well, that's not exactly what took me there. I'm great, as you know, at private theatricals, and I heard of a mediæval affair of that sort to be seen only every ten years ; it was the life and death of our Saviour represented on the stage ! I've been astonished, as you may believe, who know what amateur theatricals sometimes are, but I never expected to see such an extraordinary performance as that of last Sunday.' Here Desmond and his friends rose, as the majority of the company

left the room. 'Kellner, another bottle of that excellent Liebfrau milch, and another glass.' They sat down again.

'But, Desmond, that's only a repetition of the old Parisian mysteries or miracle plays, which have been so tritely explained in a late article in the *Quarterly*; and in which Samson dances a *pas seul* with the gates of Gaza on his back, and the Philistines take him prisoner in a quadrille.' Saying which, these young men, having the room nearly to themselves, proceeded to light cigars (bad ones as might be expected from our present knowledge of that article), and continued their conversation with more *empressment* than is fashionable in Pall-mall.

'It's not exactly that, I think. This is the result of a vow by the inhabitants only of this valley in the early part of the seventeenth century.'

'And who are the actors?' inquired Harold.

'The villagers or parishioners themselves. That was a part of the vow in the event of a plague or pestilence ceasing in that particular place.'

'And do you mean that the drama is remarkable for anything but its absurdity?'

'Absurdity is utterly removed from it. To some men it may appear solemnly blasphemous, to others it may be worth critical examination as a Scriptural play, but to neither will it exhibit features of ridicule.'

'Then on my mind, and I am not a Puritan at all events, I think the first effect would be produced, unless the acting is bad: in which case the other.'

'It is a remarkable fact, that the acting is singularly good; the effect produced by having seen Pontius Pilate, the night before, with a tremendous German pipe, inviting his customers to fill themselves with Bavarian beer, and by recognising Judas Iscariot on the morning of representation, as the honest landlord of your own inn, is odd, but it soon wears off in the interest.'

'Interest—isn't it tiresome, monotonous?'

'Monotonous? Have you seen Macready as Coriolanus? I've seen a better Roman in Pontius Pilate. Have you seen Kean in Shylock? I've seen a better, a more terrible, Jew. And there's a chorus.'

‘A chorus—what do you mean?’

‘Why, not such a chorus as ‘We are jolly good fellows,’ but a Greek chorus, who perform the parts assigned to them by Horace to the music of Bach.’

‘And is there nothing revolting in it?’ said Harold Falcon once more, who with all his gambling and debts had a just idea of the fitness of things.

‘Did I say nothing?’ replied Desmond. ‘I won’t say nothing, for the sacrament is administered on a stage by a representative of our Saviour; Judas positively hangs himself before your face, and the crucifixion becomes a palpable fact. But you must see it, Falcon.’

‘I will,’ said Harold—and he did. But when he took leave of Munich for Oberammergau he had little idea of the intelligence that awaited him there.

It will not be necessary to trouble my readers with an account of the most extraordinary performance that can well be conceived. A spectacle in a theatre, which so far resembles the classic stage as to be canopied only by the heavens, and to which some four thousand spectators are admitted, who remain unwearied on their seats from about seven in the morning till four in the afternoon, may well bear that epithet. But as Desmond had well said, the conception of the characters, the comprehension of the whole scheme, the delineation of the most mysterious life, death, and resurrection of the as yet incomprehensible, may be called something more than extraordinary. Fancy the Sanhedrim, its arguments, its determination, its refractory members. The social state of Mary and Martha, the last supper, the betrayal, the visible raising on the cross of the actor in these scenes; the unbelief of the multitudes, the gentlemanly indifference of the Roman, the turbulent malice of the Jews, even to the apparent resurrection amid the astounded soldiery. Has it not all been written in the columns of the *Times* newspaper, in the year eighteen hundred and sixty?

It was then on a brilliant morning in September that Harold Falcon found himself at the doors of what we must call the theatre. He was one of several hundreds already waiting to secure a seat. He had arrived by diligence the night before, and, though the accommodation was of the roughest, he did not feel disposed to be very

exigant. In a village whose population was four hundred, but had amounted to about as many thousands for this occasion, the effect upon chance passengers as regarded bed-fellows, might be expected to rival the inconveniences of poverty itself. Tables, chairs, casks, from which the beer had long departed, the bare floor, in many instances without a covering, empty waggons and the vehicles and conveyances which were to remain ready for to-morrow's exodus, were none without their occupants.

Harold looked in vain for a fellow-countryman ; and had he not found a good-natured German who interpreted his French into a Tyrolese *patois*, it is doubtful by what means he would have got anything to eat or drink in a land which appeared to be flowing with milk and honey.

Harold fought his way into what ought to have been a church this same Sunday morning, but which was, as I say, a theatre. The front seats, into one of which he climbed, were protected to a certain extent from the sun by an enormous canopy overshadowing about two-thirds of the spectators, and extending its welcome shade as far as the orchestra. From rain protection seemed not likely to be needed. Some members of the royal family having arrived at the proper time, a great condescension in crowned heads, the drama began.

When Harold Falcon took his eyes off the stage, which he hardly did till the first act was finished (and there were twelve, to say nothing of *entr'actes* and the chorus), he turned them on his neighbour. It was quite clear that Harold was the only Englishman in the place. There was scarcely an upturned face that could be mistaken for the cleanly-shaven type of our countrymen. There were apparently few but Germans ; and one of those few was the man who sat next to Harold. He was a young Frenchman, and a gentleman. A Parisian one would say ; for the gloves he wore, in this savage valley, though not irreproachably clean, fitted as at that period Frenchmen's gloves only fitted. Harold looked at his face a second time, and their eyes met. There was then no difficulty in getting into conversation excepting that which may exist between any old Etonian and a gentleman speaking the language of society all over the world. They would have made themselves understood when it was absolutely

necessary, but not before—fortunately the Frenchman spoke English. We need not give it with his accent or idiom. It is enough to say that it was even worse than Harold's French.

'*Mais*, it is wonderful!' said the Frenchman, shrugging his shoulders.

'You have nothing like this in Paris?' said Harold.

'Nothing; we are not fanatic enough. In Spain—well—something of the kind; but professional, rather than dramatic.'

'Have you just come from Paris?' inquired Harold again, after a few remarks on the business before them.

'No, indeed; I am going to Munich to-night, as soon as this is over. Four o'clock, I think. I have a caleche, if I can but get horses at Mürnaui. I came direct from Switzerland. I was lately at Chamouni.'

'I have been in Chamouni, early in the season,' said Harold, who felt bound to say something between the acts.

'And have ascended Mont Blanc? All Englishmen think it their duty to ascend a mountain, where there is nothing to be seen and great danger to be incurred.'

'No, indeed, I have not,' and Harold laughed; 'but I don't know that I should have been deterred by the danger you speak of. It's a very expensive kind of recreation. Besides which, the weather is not favourable at all times.'

'You are right; none but the most experienced guides should be consulted, and their advice strictly followed. Three of your countrymen would be alive now, fine young men, if they had listened to their guides.'

'Three have died lately on Mont Blanc?'

'Only two days ago. The day I left Chamouni. The weather had been apparently splendid; and on the day before, these Englishmen wished to make the ascent. An experienced guide, named Balmat, came to us the night before (I was to have gone with them), and showed us in the clear sky, hanging over the mountains, a small white cloud, no bigger than my hand.' And he held it out, well-gloved and small. "'There is risk to-morrow in an ascent," said he. "All may go well, but there is risk." I and my friends declined to go, and we did all we could to persuade Mr. Falcon to remain, but——'

'Mr. who?' said Harold, and his eyes dilated, and his hand rested on the arm of the Frenchman with a nervous grasp, as he put the question.

'Mr. Falcon,' and he spoke as distinctly as possible. 'What, you knew him? he was a friend of yours? Ah, forgive me,' as he saw Harold's agitation, who naturally first jumped to the conclusion that his Cousin George was the victim of his own rashness. So satisfied was he of this probability that he forgot to hear the end of the catastrophe. It was sufficient for him that a Mr. Falcon had perished on Mont Blanc: there was but one of that name that it could well be.

His mind was made up at once, so he said abruptly,

'You return to Munich at once?'

'My carriage is ordered at half-past four to-day.'

'The gentleman you mention is a relative of mine. I can get to Chamouni more quickly by reaching Munich or Innsbruck first. You will excuse me if I ask whether you have room, and if so inclination to allow me to share your carriage, should you have room.'

The Frenchman took his hand, and assured Harold of his wish and power to serve him. He had no companions on this part of his journey, and the Englishman's company would be a pleasure to him, and a great advantage: 'you know the road?' It was kindly said.

'I know you must go to a place called Mürnau from here; and then to the lake of Starnberg. The road to Munich is well known from there, and we shall reach it late to-night or early to-morrow morning.'

'That will depend upon the horses,' inquired the Frenchman.

'Whether we can get them? At a time like this there may be difficulties.'

'Then let us be off at once. Anything to relieve your anxieties.'

'No, no, Monsieur,'—and Harold insisted upon his friend remaining to the last scene,—'after that as soon as you will.'

The journey to Munich was a difficulty from the crowded state of the road. First, was the caleche forthcoming? There it stood, ready and packed, and Harold threw in his knapsack, and was ready to be gone. He

fidgeted to a degree. Then came the horses. The landlord was willing to assist the Frenchman, reminiscent of old alliances (for he had been a soldier), and he put the horses to with Harold's assistance. But where was the post-boy—the Kutscher? Where was the best Bavarian beer to be found? And while Harold bit his lip, and thought over the terrible catastrophe, he could not ask his companion to recount the story. At last came the Kutscher, and they started.

But when men are in a hurry they always seem to be delayed. Not that really they are so, but their thoughts so far precede their actions, as to throw the latter needlessly into the background. The crowd was not greater at the dirty little village, at which they stopped to sup, and bait their cattle on *schwartz-brod*, than was always the case on such occasions; but Harold's mind was at Munich, anxiously inquiring for letters, long before his body could be so. The steamer on the lake at Starnberg was no later than usual, nor were they longer in getting the caleche on board than they should have been, but Harold Falcon had not been accustomed to contradiction or delay, and the present seemed to him an occasion when there ought to have been none. He swallowed his food as if bad digestion was an acceleration of speed; and when at last he reached Munich, he was disposed to blame the government that he had still some few hours, in which he must refresh himself after his journey.

His fellow-traveller, Alphonse de Castelnau, flattered himself that he had acquired the *sang froid* which was supposed to be purely British, that he had in fact supplanted his companion in that desirable characteristic.

'Did you hear, Monsieur de Castelnau, who were the companions of Mr. Falcon in his ascent?'

'No, indeed, I did not. The principal was a Mr. Falcon; those who accompanied him were younger. He seemed to have the management of them. They lived together the only two days I was with them, and arranged the intended ascent among themselves?'

This was but little like George, unless he had taken pupils with him from Oxford or London, thought Harold. And then he proceeded to catechise his companion, who to tell the truth was well disposed to gratify his curiosity.

'Tall, I think you say?' And to show how much his mind was occupied with his subject, he asked the question *apropos* to nothing.

'Yes, and rather dark, but not so dark as you.' Saying which, the young Frenchman looked at Harold, and tried to trace a likeness, but failed. Then he ventured to ask for particulars. 'They had been watched from the Breven; everything had gone right even to the *grands et petits mulets*: but the atmosphere had become clouded, the wind had risen, the summer heat had loosened the frozen snow from its base, and an avalanche from which there was no escape had carried down the three Englishmen and a guide, the rest having been miraculously preserved; they themselves knew not how.'

Harold arrived at Chamouni at last, not by our modern method of railway travelling, but by the monotonous and circuitous route of divers eil-wagens, which, if pace have anything to do with it, certainly do not deserve the name. He had written to his banker at Vienna, and received supplies, which met him at one point of his journey; for he felt that it would be necessary to husband his resources for the melancholy event in which he was to participate. There was no doubt of its truth, and an interview with the first stranger he met left no doubt on his mind of the truth of a portion at least of the Frenchman's story.

The man who reaches a place unexpectedly, bearing the same name as one who has just been destroyed by an avalanche, unless it be Smythe or Jones, is sure of some sort of recognition. He must excite some feeling, either of curiosity or envy, perhaps of compassion. The aubergiste was all attention, and detailed as much as he knew of the adventure. 'The three gentlemen had met with this untimely fate' — he said that in English, having learnt much of that language from books. He added the expressive word 'schrecklich' from his own. Would Monsieur like to see the visitors' book, and the English chaplain? The first was in the house, the second in his lodgings, not a stone's throw from the hotel.

'Yes,' said Harold, 'I should like to see the visitors' book; but not here. Allow me to come to your private apartment.'

‘With pleasure, Monsieur,’ and the waiter led the way. Before he left the public-room, into which he had been shown, Harold looked round. There were a few Englishmen there, not one of whom he knew; a few who might have been English had they not been Americans. There was nobody immediately present to whom he felt disposed to talk, so he followed the waiter.

He was scarcely prepared for the surprise. He ran his finger down the book in the page presented to him by the landlord, who stood aloof, and stopped at the word ‘Falcon.’

The Hon. Jervoise Falcon.

‘*Si, Monsieur*; that’s the gentleman who was here, and is——’ The man did not finish the sentence. Harold’s finger continued along the line,—‘and brothers.’

‘The Hon. Jervoise Falcon and brothers,’ repeated he to himself, scarcely able to articulate the words; ‘my cousins—poor Helen!’ The book remained open before him.

‘And those were the gentlemen who were with you?’

‘They were. They made the ascent together. They waited here some days before they could ascend, and then, *ach Gott!*’ And the poor landlord, who had the feeling of landlords usually for lost customers, and some for customers lost altogether, spread his hands and ceased speaking.

‘Der Herr Pasteur von Schmidt!’ said the waiter at this juncture opening the door. This high-sounding title ushered in a quiet, well-bred gentleman, clothed in coloured trowsers, a black coat and waistcoat, and a white neckcloth, who answered to the name of Smith. He was the clergyman of the English congregation at Chamouni during the summer and autumn months. Such an institution was quite novel then; it has become necessary now. However, we may presume without offence that it is not the Smiths who have brought the congregations, but the congregations who have brought the Smiths. I wish well to the labours of that energetic class during the Paris Exhibition. There will be great need of their labours, and much opportunity for their exertions, if I know anything of the attractions of that capital.

A word on Herr von Schmidt, who presented himself to Harold as the English chaplain, anxious to sympathise with a sufferer, and to offer his assistance in any way that it could be made available. Smith had no fault in the world but one. He found it quite impossible to make both ends meet upon seventy-five pounds a year and a cottage in a healthy and picturesque part of Hampshire. He had a wife and three children; and he was obliged to wash, dress, and eat and drink—the whole lot of them upon that miserable pittance—as a gentleman ought to do. He lasted as long as he could in an ungrateful country which knows no crime equal to poverty, in a social point of view. He had taken three years' credit, after paying away all the ready money he could raise, and then disappeared among the savage rocks, crevasses, and glaciers of a country which, as Smith poetically observed, was less inhospitable than his own. Even there, he scarcely contemplated remaining longer than necessity and his landlord's claims demanded. Beyond this incapability to support life (not his own alone) upon nothing, men knew of nothing to his prejudice.

Mr. Smith was not long in explaining to Harold everything it was necessary for him to know. There was no doubt as to the fact that the unhappy Englishmen were Harold's cousins, Lord Falconberg's sons. They had come abroad after the beginning of the Eton vacation; and as few better opportunities could have presented themselves, under the guidance of Jervoise, the two boys—one of nineteen, the other nearly two years younger—had started for Switzerland. An ascent of Mont Blanc has become a matter of every day's occurrence in these times of muscular Christianity and universal athletics. At that time it was a feat no more difficult than now, but bringing with it just that amount of increased glory which is due to the increased expense. Even then, however, unruly spirits were unwilling to take advice, or to govern themselves by that experience, which, if it ever is peculiarly valuable, is so in the latitude of the high Alps.

It is somewhat curious that, in a thoroughly selfish, worldly-minded spendthrift, it was some hours before he remembered the difference that these most untimely deaths made to his own prospects. He thought of

Helen and of his uncle; and it was not till Mr. Smith, in the plenitude of his snobbism, reminded him of it, that he saw how much more terrible this accident must appear than if it had happened to the three sons of a poor old apple-woman, whose absolute bread depended upon their existence; as if natural affection were not always swallowed up in the practical utility of one's offspring.

'Sons of Lord Falconberg, I believe, Mr. Falcon,' said the Herr Pasteur: 'always so distressing when such a loss befalls our aristocracy.' And Smith turned the cigar in his mouth, which if worse was cheaper than those he smoked at Cambridge. 'The loss of an eldest son must be a terrible blow in such a family as yours.'

'But this gentleman was not Lord Falconberg's oldest son; though I think my uncle and the rest of the family will feel it terribly.' And then it first occurred to Harold, that three days ago there stood four good lives between him and the title, and now but one. He was sure, at least, that it would be welcome intelligence to Messrs. Meshech and Co.'

'Ah, how fortunate!' said Smith, as if they could therefore be well afforded; 'and you will proceed to London immediately. I have already seen the authorities here on the subject; and anything, as a relation, you should wish to be done, shall be carried out to the letter. I mean as to their effects. I fear there is no hope that they, poor fellows, will ever be recovered.'





CHAPTER XVII.

THE PRODIGAL RETURNS.

THERE was nobody in town that could possibly be out of it. There was Bond Street half up, St. James's Street was in its usual condition of gas-fitting, and Pall Mall was boarded and hoarded from the Athenæum to the Guards' Club. The national monuments were being cleaned, and another figure was being talked of for Trafalgar Square, but nothing was being done. All the men that one knew were in Scotland, i.e., about one hundred per cent. of those that are there now; all the watering-places on the south coast were full; Scarborough had just bought three bath-chairs; and St. Leonards had succeeded in entrapping an earl and two baronets with their families for a month. The West-end looked as if the veriest *mauvais sujet* might have traversed it with nothing for idle hands to do.

The sun shone down upon the baked pavements, the winds blew up and down the streets, the dust took possession of the shop windows and counters, for there were none to retard its progress by either a watering cart or a duster. There was one waiter at Long's, John Collins reigned alone at Limmers', two clerks managed the business at Herries and Farquhar's, while a single partner sat in the back parlour studying the *Morning Post* for an account of Lord Blazington's success among the grouse, and one solitary member, Boreham, had the whole of White's window to himself.

It was late in the day when a post-chaise and a pair of

horses which were smoking with the last stage of the Dover Road drove up to the Clarendon. At that well-appointed house there was a porter, who however felt that it must be a mistake, and was about to close that portal upon the chaise, when he happened to catch sight of the occupant. He touched his hat and advanced to the window.

‘Will you inquire whether anything has been left here for me, or whether Lord Falconberg has been in town lately?’ The man retired, and returned in a minute.

‘A letter was sent from here to Lord Falconberg only yesterday, Sir: so that the clerk does not think his lordship will be in town again yet. His lordship went down to Hawkestone from here. The house in Grosvenor Square is shut up, Sir.’

‘Thank you; tell him to drive on to Limmers.’ And he did so.

At the moment the chaise turned into Conduit Street, Harold—for it was he—caught sight of Lord Billesdon, an old acquaintance, and intimate with his cousin Hawkestone. His lordship not only knew everybody, but all things. If anybody could give him information, it would be he.

‘Billesdon,’ said Harold, alighting opposite him, or rather waiting till he reached the corner of St. George’s Street, ‘how came you to be in town?’

‘Not by choice, Harold. Did you ever see such dust? I’m just back from Halliburton’s. The worst of the heather is that it unfits one for any other sort of walking. I can hardly get on on level ground without tumbling down.’ And here Lord Billesdon indulged in a laugh.

‘Good sport?’

‘Excellent. Halliburton didn’t shoot himself; but Spencer Pole did.’

‘Good Heavens, Billesdon, what do you mean?’

‘Oh! I see—rather good that. I mean, did not shoot—himself, you know? We were generally two parties of three guns each, and he wasn’t with us. Hawkestone was there—he left us two or three days ago. Egad! I see you’ve heard the news, by your hat. Awful! wasn’t it?’

‘It was—then they knew it at Hawkestone? I was

half afraid they had never heard it : and was going to post down to-night.'

'Yes. It was in the papers. Now I think of it, it's a pull for you. It's an ill wind that blows nobody good.' Harold didn't answer his very obvious congratulations ; but ordered a bed at Limmers' Having wished Lord Billesdon good-bye, and declined his club-dinner, he performed his ablutions and went out.

Whenever a man is bent upon shirking one bore, or upon having a quiet hour's digestion, mental or physical, he may be quite certain that a moral Charybdis awaits him in the shape of another. And so it was with Harold Falcon upon this occasion. It may easily be conceived that he had plenty of subjects on which to exercise his meditations ; and with a knowledge of the deserted state of London it was not extraordinary that he sought the solitude he wanted at his club.

To all appearance he found it. The huge room was deserted, the handsome curtains, mirrors, and chandeliers were covered with brown holland, and one only servant with a third or fourth day's pair of stockings on, and a generally dirty tone, was to be found sitting disconsolately over the evening paper. He looked almost happy when Falcon asked what he could have for dinner, and presented a carte which had not been changed since the functionary's shirt. Having ordered what he wanted and taken his choice of tables, he walked out for half an hour.

'Well, Meshech,' said Harold, walking into the dingy back room of a dirty house in Oxendon Street, which had externally the appearance of a lawyer's office, but was in reality a bill-discounters' den of thieves,—'good-morning. I'm come to England with some foreign money, and I want to change it. I'm going back to the club, and you can do it at once.'

'With pleasure, captain,' said Meshech, bowing in a fashion to Harold which was quite new to him ; 'with pleasure ; and what's the figure, captain ?'

'There's a rouleau, there's another, that's eighty pounds. Here are half-a-dozen Napoleons, at sixteen and eight-pence ; and these are five-franc pieces. I know you'll give me the best exchange.'

‘Moses ! why should I give *you* the best exchange ? I should give the best to everybody. There, captain, there’s the money. You’ve been away in the country somewhere.’

‘I have, since I saw you. I think we’re all safe now, Meshech. Nothing out against us?’

‘Nothing out against us, captain, assuredly. And you don’t want anything in my way ? Times are better, and I can afford a hundred at a moderate rate.’

‘That’s more than you could a twelvemonth ago, Meshech. You’ve become wonderfully liberal all of a sudden,’ said Harold.

‘Ah, liberal—well, you’re an old friend, Captain Falcon ; but money’s very dear, very tight ; there’s the whole of the regiment always a renewing.’

‘I can do without now, for the present that is. But I say, Meshech, do you remember your offer a long time ago—two thousand down for the reversion of Hawkstone Castle and the estates?’ And Harold couldn’t help looking somewhat maliciously at the old Jew, who shrieked out,—

‘Yes ! yes ! I’ll do it now ; take three thousand—there, that’s handsome, captain ; you know there’s four good young lives between you and Hawkestone.’ But anyone who had looked at the Jew might have detected some *arrière pensée*. Harold only smiled and said,—

‘I’m afraid you’ve been muddling your brain by reading the papers, old man ; there, don’t be angry. You see I know all about it.’ Saying which Harold walked through the murky passage, and disappeared.

His dinner was ready, and all the better for being undisturbed. He had got to the lemon pudding, which he thought safe, and knew to be good, when a Colonel Mullingar walked into the dining-room, and took the seat next to him.

Colonel Mullingar was an Irish gentleman of good position, in parliament, chairman of quarter sessions, and up to his eyes in horseflesh. Just one of those men it is impossible to get rid of. He had also the tenacity of the leech, when he once drew blood.

‘Falcon, bedad ! is it you ? Ah, this is pleasant now ; and nobody in London that fool of a waiter said. What’s

the committee about that they keep such a fellow? Well, now, and how have you been?’

Frank groaned inwardly, but smiled like all martyrs—it's the right thing to do. ‘Thank you, pretty well.’ Here the lemon pudding ought to have been sent away, but he began to eat again in self-defence. Unfortunately the colonel was one of those men whom it is impossible to shunt; he was so respectable that it did men good to be seen with him even; so that it would never do for Harold to retreat; besides he had ordered cheese and a salad and a pint of Burgundy, *Clos Vougeot*.

‘What's doing in the country, colonel? I've been abroad.’

‘The ministers are performing just now on the provincial stage. They prognosticate great things for the people, which are to cure all their ailments: household suffrage, or manhood suffrage; the universities thrown open to the Nonconformists, excepting the Romanists—which is intended to gratify my countrymen; an increase of the Episcopate, without a seat in the Lords; the abolishment of capital punishment, and the Lord-lieutenancy of Ireland; and the total abolition of the game-laws.’

‘By Jove, colonel, those are sweeping measures. I presume they intend some of those measures to be gradual, at all events.’

‘Faith, Sir, I don't know what we're coming to. I've a helper in my stables that can't clean a horse; but he can read and write and do the rule of three. And where do you come from just now—from Hawkestone?’

‘From Chamouni, to-day, with some melancholy news for my uncle.’

‘We've heard of it. The old lord will suffer, Falcon; it's a sad business, what with Lady Helen's engagement, and Hawkestone's ill-health.’

This was news to Harold; and he was so surprised that he repeated the old colonel's words—‘Lady Helen's engagement!’

‘Why haven't you heard? The finest girl in London engaged to that d—d fool, Farina.’

‘And Hawkestone's ill-health. What's the matter with Hawkestone?’

‘Matter enough, my dear fellow. He hasn’t six months to live. Cardiac has given him up, and Dr. Lobel thinks he may last two years in Madeira, with luck. With luck, mind you.’

Harold was not a man of brusque manners, far from it; but he took up his hat, and wishing the colonel a good-evening, just as that worthy began to think that he had roused some sort of interest in his hearer, disappeared down the stairs, and walked slowly to his hotel.

By the first particular conveyance out of town the next morning Harold Falcon took an outside place for Hawkestone. John Collins, that elaborate compounder of whisky punch (Stultz had his rival in coats, Goldby in breeches, but John Collins was unrivalled in punch), who had known the captain in his palmiest days, was somewhat scandalised by his proceedings. Nothing short of a chaise out and pair would have satisfied him; and he was not quite sure that the captain should have gone away from Conduit-street with less than four. However, as it was clear to Harold that he was saved from the pain of carrying such heart-rending intelligence, he felt the necessity of posting down the road to be less than that which urged him up to town from Dover. Indeed he was not very sorry to delay the meeting with his uncle and cousin; for he knew it would be a painful one whenever it occurred; and the only bit of selfishness which peeped out of his character was the sincere pleasure at not being the first bearer of the melancholy news.

He reached the lodge-gates of Hawkestone Castle, and leaving his luggage made his way on foot to the house. The servants who opened the door to him were already in their mourning, and an air of stillness, quite unusual with a place in which so much gaiety and life had usually prevailed, proclaimed the change that had come over it. When he reached the top of the magnificent staircase, which led to a room generally in use when the family were alone, the servant threw open the door and announced ‘Mr. Falcon.’

In a moment Hawkestone was on his feet; and walking up to his cousin, shook him warmly by both hands; while Lady Helen rose from her chair and made no attempt to conceal her satisfaction.

‘I knew it. I was sure this great grief would bring Harold back to us.’

It was in his uncle that the young man saw the great change that a few days’ grief will sometimes bring to the old. The bereavement of his sons had shaken the old lord: and when Harold sought him in his sanctum he found him unable to conquer his emotion. The fine old sportsman’s cheeks had not the fresh bright complexion, which, with his white silken hair, was the characteristic of his face; and the clear gray eye and well-shaped features were drawn and lined, and seemed not yet to have recovered their serenity. Harold had been a great favourite of Lord Falconberg, until his habits of dissipation and his taste for gambling had somewhat alienated his uncle’s affection for him; and he had never forgiven his imprudence or independence in leaving the Guards. Now he was glad to see Harold, and to welcome him again.

Something unusual mingled with the tenderness with which he received him, and he seemed to think that the affection—the objects of which he had lost—might well be bestowed upon his old friend Harold.

Harold Falcon himself could not help being flattered by the kindness of his uncle and Hawkestone. But Lady Helen’s expressions of confidence in him were inexpressibly dear to him. She understood him; she saw through all his vanity and extravagance that he was not the selfish being that almost everyone must give him credit for being. And as we cling with greater tenacity to the one remaining support when the rest have betrayed us, so did Harold see in his cousin one connecting link with what he had been, but could scarcely hope to be again.

Before leaving this part of our story, I should be glad to leave as good an impression of our hero on the reader’s mind as possible. For this purpose it will be necessary to consider his antecedents, and compare with them the present condition of mind at which he has arrived.

The law of primogeniture, a remarkable law, which furnishes us with stalwart gentlemen of ample means and good report capable of keeping up their state, and improving their tenantry, had borne with a little weight on the Falcon family. The owner of Hawkestone and the title of Falconberg had a clear rentroll of about thirty

thousand a-year—certainly enough to live upon like a gentleman. The younger brothers of this family had, however, been but slenderly provided for, excepting by that beneficent providence, which a scandalous world calls jobbery. The father of Harold—General Falcon—and of a numerous offspring who have nothing to do with this story, was in the army. He had lived a jovial rollicking life at home, riding the family horses to the family hounds, and drinking the family claret and champagne to the health of himself and the rest of the neighbourhood. Once in the army, as the cadet of a fine old Tory family with a vast amount of influence and will to serve the government, he was not allowed to want for anything that patronage could give him. And why not? It had been and still was in the nature of things. But after the general's death, when these good things returned to that villanously-reformed House of Commons, what was to be done with his boys. There was a dirty little incompetency for each, which served to give them bread and cheese and beer, instead of clear turtle and champagne, and the pleasure of walking for a constitutional after a heavy day's work was done, instead of Flint, the keeper, with Falconberg's pointers, or the chestnut mare, and the young Irish horse, to ride through the early part of the day. Harold had enjoyed all this to perfection. There was nothing he couldn't do during his father's life, and nothing he didn't want after his father's death. He had all the tastes of a fast man, all the feeling and instinct of a disappointed one. Thrown into the best society, how was he to keep pace with it? Crockford's and Newmarket presented the only resources available for a gentleman. Then came debt, and the means of paying for a certain time was obvious; so long as his commission was not forestalled, the Jews were merciful. If ever any man had been well treated it was Harold Falcon, but it could not last for ever. Like all gamblers, sometimes he was lucky, sometimes the reverse. A splendid horseman, and a friend of many owners (who by-the-way are very bad judges of their horses' capabilities), Jansen and such men would trust to his pulling off a good stake, before the fatal *trimestre* was over. A fine, handsome, unquestioning borrower, regardless of percentage or the price of

money, he was a favourite with many, who would rather have given him a turn than many a better man.

With such temptations is it wonderful that he came to grief? His uncle's allowance and his pay would have kept a poor man's son honestly ; it procured for Harold gloves (which were then accustomed to be worn outside of the pockets), an opera stall, a modest hack or two with good kneec action, which he kept at livery ; rooms in the Albany, the entrée at a few good clubs, the best clothes, boots, and cigars in London, with all the other necessities of existence ; to which having been always accustomed, he considered himself still entitled. How he managed to go on so long no one seems to know. The sale of his commission was a mistake ; but Hawkestone, who tried to dissuade him, was powerless. He knew his own necessities best, he said ; and his cousin offered him assistance, which he would not accept because he knew it to be useless. Then came his last *coup*, by which he might have lasted another year or two, but which happy device was destroyed by the suicide of poor Lord Cranstone. Then he went abroad.

So far Harold had been a fool, and worse, he had been a gambler and a *roué*, but there was some good in him yet. He got hold of some money, enough to leave England ; it is not our business here to ask how. Jansen was satisfied, so was Harold, but he didn't look so. From that moment, however, Harold Falcon formed a resolution of amendment from which he never swerved. We must follow him now through other phases of his life ; he has learnt his lesson without any hard teaching, and it may be that something severer would be better for him, perhaps is in store for him. We have but slight experience of his capability to bear the pressure of long overgripping poverty, still less of his fortitude in unexpected success.



CHAPTER XVIII.

HAWKESTONE CASTLE.

HERE are certain parts of the north-western provinces of England which appear to me to combine all the beauties of scenery requisite for completing a finished landscape. Wood, water, verdant uplands interspersed with the golden grain, are there united in one picture; while the rich and fertile meads are broken in upon by a wilder scenery, partaking in a measure of the sterner character of the Welsh Principality.

It was in one of these counties that Hawkestone Castle was situated. It had long been the property of the Falcon family, who had, indeed, no other seat in England belonging to them. So that the time which was not spent at a favourite shooting-lodge in Aberdeenshire and the London house in Grosvenor-square, was devoted to Hawkestone. And here was dispensed that princely hospitality so becoming our English nobility, and so far distinguishing them from any other aristocracy. Here it was that assembled not only the old lord's county friends, the astute politicians or faded courtiers of the Regency and Carlton House, the old sportsmen who still rode with the Hawkestone, or went in their four-in-hand barouches to the county meetings, but the young Guardsmen and men-about-town, who drank Lord Hawkestone's claret at his club, and indulged in the same Greenwich and Richmond dinners as he and Harold. It was at Hawkestone Castle that, while the elders plotted new

Reform Bills, to be given or withheld, who speculated upon the probability of a Whig or Tory government, many a match over four miles of fair hunting country, or the last half of the Abingdon mile at Newmarket, was concluded: and while the steady rubber for shillings and fives was going on in the blue drawing-room, the billiard-room was kept alive by a flow of wit, conversation, and high spirits which would have been looked for in vain in any other house in the county. Hawkestone was essentially *the home* of the Falconbergs, and to all the neighbourhood, and to all their friends, it opened its portals in the true charity of a feudal gentleman. If the great were welcomed by the lordly hospitality of its owner, the poor man was never allowed to forget one object for which so many blessings were bestowed upon his master.

From one of the grandest situations that can be conceived in a country like this, where beauty is rather the characteristic of the landscape than its greatness, Hawkestone Castle looked down upon a vale rich in every variety of scenery; and on to distant hills and wooded promontories, each of which served for an especial landmark in their several counties or neighbourhoods. Some portion of no less than seven different counties were said to be seen from the Castle terrace; and the whole prospect, on one side at least, was enhanced by the broad and rapid river, which lost itself miles and miles from the Castle, after wandering as a silver cord through its banks; here gently sloping to meet the current, and there boldly defying it with massive rocks and steep or rugged sides; while it appeared like a chain which linked the whole together, and formed a bond of union and beauty almost as much in fact as in idea. Where many a stream has, like the Rubicon or the Rhine, separated interests and prompted strife, the noble stream, which was seen for miles from Hawkestone, was a by-word of love and strength between those who dwelt upon its banks.

The immediate neighbourhood of the Castle is worthy a closer description. The building itself was so far remarkable that that part of it which was inhabited was no more a castle than Buckingham Palace. It was a very large, massive, cheerful-looking structure, which had been built of gray stone in the reign of Charles, or more

strictly speaking, during the Commonwealth, the previous building having been burnt during the Civil War. There remained, however, a certain portion of the old building, a magnificent tower and façade, to which the more modern portion had been added; thus securing to the present edifice the name which it had borne since the days of William II., in whose reign it was built. On three sides it was surrounded by a magnificent terrace, in the centre of which were fountains and basins, with a succession of closely-kept lawns and beautiful flower-beds, rich during the summer with every colour that sience or wealth could devise and procure. The third side was devoted to the offices, forming a large and imposing quadrangle, of which three sides were stables, approached by lofty gateways on either side, on which were the old badges and coats of arms of the worthy and earliest warriors of the family. Descending from the terrace, in itself a long promenade extending round three sides of the Castle, by succeeding steps and terraces, on the pedestals of which appeared again colossal statues of the favourite emblem—a falcon with outstretched wings and golden claws—the explorer came upon an abrupt hill or knoll, leading to the river's side, through shrubberies and walks planted throughout with rhododendrons, azalias, and other American shrubs; while here and there rare and valuable pines and foreign firs served to enrich the beauty and prodigality of nature. On the right stretched the park, on the near side of the river, undulating soberly, and interspersed with occasional patches of wild heather; while on the other side, woods 'in gay theatric pride' came down to the very edge of the stream, ascending higher and higher as they retreated from the banks, until they rose, in places, almost to a corresponding height with the Castle.

It was here that Lord Falconberg had his *battues*. Here he bred innumerable pheasants, among the gnarled oaks which twisted their giant limbs on either side of the river. Here too the vixen laid up her cubs in the dry sandy soil, and brought them down in the spring and early summer to drink; until in the morning, when the heavy dew was still upon the grass, the young hounds were thrown in to learn their lesson, and to move the foxes destined for the winter's sport. In these covers was

the flight of the woodcock stayed, and many a couple in December rewarded Lord Hawkestone and his friends for the trouble of a walk through the tangled briars and brambles of the Hawkestone covers: which, indeed, reminds me that I may have an opportunity of correcting some mistaken notions on the subject of *battue* and cover shooting, which appear to belong mainly to those who can have no experience of its virtues, necessities, or difficulty. Here, too, beneath these woods reposed the silvery salmon in its pool, a rare victim to the skill and perseverance of Harold Falcon, when, as a boy, he preferred the society of the old keeper, with his rich store of anecdote and sport, to the more sober realities of book-learning. The browsing deer and the lordly stags that grazed over the open pasture, or stood at gaze beneath the mouldering branches of the decaying oak, gave a finish to the whole scene, which was one scarcely to be equalled. Such was the hereditary property of the Falcons.

The house, in its way, was as beautiful as the park and grounds. The very colour of the stone gave a massive warmth to it, which, while it impaired none of its original grandeur, added to it that sentiment of *home* in which so many of our finest residences are deficient. Some are like barracks, some like infirmaries, some like ogres' castles, and some so overloaded with ornament, or so subdued with stained glass, mullions, fretted roofs, and ecclesiastical gloom, as to make sunshine almost an impossibility, and dancing an impropriety, if not something worse. There was nothing like this in the Castle. It was ample enough for anything. There were huge reception rooms, which might accommodate the county; there were fine airy passages and open corridors and spaces all over the house. The hall upon which we entered was loftily and noble in its proportions; but was warm and cheerful in winter, with the dogs at either end, which supported the crackling logs of pine and elm; and light and cool in summer, with its open windows and bright prospects. From its sides sprung the arches which led into the sitting-rooms on either side; and in the centre was the magnificent staircase, not kept in lavender for the reception of lord-lieutenants, peers, county mag-

nates, or metropolitan grandees, but in ordinary use for the members of Lord Falconberg's family and the guests they entertained habitually.

And in former times, when some old lord was a younger man, a very jovial, rollicking set those guests were, requiring a good broad staircase to go up and down and a house in which the noise in the dining-room need not be heard by the countess in the drawing-room. Such things had been in generations gone by ; but we write of a day when, if vice is as rampant, it is at least more refined, perhaps more insidious.

The rooms were hung with fine old portraits of the Falcons. Warriors—apocryphal gentlemen, who must have been indebted to imagination for their existence in oil or on canvas, though the scrolls of their fame existed in the Hawkestone archives. Statesmen and men of learning, governors of colonies, soldiers, sailors, and fine gentlemen, were ranged around the rooms, interspersed with charming portraits of sportsmen of the last age, with hound and horn, which latter, as there represented, required but little winding beyond what the artist had given it. There were two courtiers, as we have said, and country gentlemen of the Sir Roger de Coverley school, who had found the size of the rooms and the width of the staircases more than convenient.





CHAPTER XIX.

AFTER A LONG INTERVAL.

IT wanted about an hour or two to dinner at the Castle, and two persons, old acquaintances of the reader, were sauntering leisurely, as it appeared, towards the house. Not so leisurely in mind as in body. Actively, indeed, in that respect, were they both engaged, as they came slowly on by the river's bank towards the steep hill-side, which led to the steps of the terrace.

'And you think my father much altered, Harold?' said Lady Helen, as she waited a moment, while Harold Falcon threw once more among some dark stones, in the hope of a rise, before getting his tackle together.

'I do, very much. He seemed two or three years ago to have almost recovered his spirits after the death of those poor boys in Switzerland; but latterly he looks worse than I have ever seen him. What is it, Helen?'

'You have noticed nothing yourself in any way?' said she, shading her eyes with her hand, as the sun was getting lower in the west, and looking at her cousin with a searching glance.

'Nothing, calculated to give him fresh uneasiness. There can be nothing in his affairs; for though he has always kept a liberal and almost extravagant house, my uncle has such a property as to justify any state he may choose to live in. And as to Hawkestone,'—and here

Lady Helen took a more serious and rigid investigation of Harold's face.

'Well, Harold, what of Hawkestone?'

'I don't believe he ever gave Lord Falconberg a moment's uneasiness in his life. I wish to goodness I could say the same.'

'And you regret it, Harold, I'm sure. He was hurt at your leaving the Guards without consulting him, and at some other little matters. But it's so long ago, and circumstances have so altered—I think you would like to do him a favour if you could.' And Lady Helen's voice faltered strangely when she got as far as this; which it need not have done, seeing that they were not only cousins, but had been much together all their lives.

'I don't suppose you doubt it, Helen; but it sounds like the fable of the Lion and the Mouse: that net always struck me as being a very exceptional case, indeed.'

'He talks a great deal about you, when you are away; and yesterday he told me that he should like to have you down here constantly. And, in fact, Harold,'—and Lady Helen spoke with some little hesitation, — 'papa asked me to mention it to you, and see whether there was any prospect——'

Harold Falcon never raised his eyes to the beautiful face by his side, but said—not in the calm quiet tone in which he usually spoke, but in a rather quick, unsettled voice—'Constantly? No, no, he didn't mean constantly. He forgets too, Helen,'—and here he gave a little laugh, somewhat forced, — 'that since our great-aunt's death I am a landed-proprietor.'

'So I told him.' Here Harold looked at his cousin curiously, as if he would know the exact meaning of these words. But Lady Helen did not flinch. 'So I told him,' said she; 'but he said you could easily let the place you have, that it wasn't worth half a year's income of Hawkestone, and that it was better for you to be here.' Lady Helen said all this quite mechanically, and gave Harold no sort of idea that she herself was interested in his movements, either one way or the other.

'Have you any notion that my uncle has a particular reason for such a wish?' Helen blushed deeply, though

Harold did not see her ; for their thoughts had wandered into different channels ; as young men's and maiden's will when the confidence between them can be but partial. At length she said, 'Yes ; he wants you to take the active management of the hounds.'

'But there's Hawkestone. Surely he's as good for the purpose as I.'

'And the covers : Hawkestone cares less about that than hunting.'

'Well, I can do that without living entirely at the Castle. You'd soon get tired of me, Helen.'

'I hope, Harold, you've never had reason to think so.'

'Never. But make Hawkestone marry, and bring his wife to the Castle, and then your father will not want me to take his place. And then I'll come and be your guest as usual, for as long and as often as you like.'

'Perhaps Lord Falconberg can persuade you ; I can't.'

At that moment, at a little distance in front of them, they came upon Lord Hawkestone.

For the first time in his life Harold Falcon imagined that he saw a difference in his cousin. It might be fancy, but he thought those broad, flat shoulders were somewhat narrowed and bent, and that the light active step was wanting in that firm but elastic tread, which he had so often admired as the Guardsman walked down St. James's-street to go on guard or to attend a drawing-room or a levée. Was it only a listlessness which an idle country life is apt to engender, and which had been put on when he laid aside his bearskin, and returned to his home, to cheer his father, and participate in his sports, which he had done as soon as he could, after the terrible catastrophe which bereft the house of three loved children at once—leaving himself and Lady Helen to supply the affectionate care and honest gaiety, to which Lord Falconberg had been accustomed from his younger children ? or was it really his own want of consideration for other people had blinded him to the fact that Hawkestone's health was not what it had been, and that the change of life from the jovial society of his regiment, and a town life, had truly wrought the indifference which he fancied he perceived in his cousin's gait, as he moved slowly up the hill before them ?

I don't know whether my readers have ever noticed, as I have done, the extraordinary expression which is given to momentary character, impulse, or feeling, by the turn of a shoulder, or the limbs. Not of course to the extent of the countenance in depicting permanent sentiment; but so very strongly in those cursory movements of the mind with which a man may be affected by temporary anxiety, pleasure, fear, determination, or ill-health. If not let me recommend to them a study of a well-known picture, the original of which is to be seen in the Duke d'Aumale's house at Twickenham. *Le duel après le bal* has exactly this point most strongly illustrated in the back of the successful duellist, a North American Indian, who is being urged from the ground by his second, dressed as a harlequin, while his victim lies in the very grasp of death, surrounded by his friends. The involuntary struggle to look back, if not to stay, or return to ask forgiveness and to close the eyes which are manifestly losing all consciousness of surrounding objects, notwithstanding the necessity for immediate flight, is manifested with marvellous power by M. Gérôme, the painter of a picture, one of the most powerful creations of the day.

Now it was just this idea that was presenting itself to Harold when he saw nothing but his cousin's figure, as he passed from their sight round the last zig-zag that led to the terrace: he saw nothing of the face, no paleness, no weariness, no dejection, but that strange, unmistakable drag of the limbs, which, when not the effect of prolonged bodily exertion, is an invariable accompaniment of impaired health.

Harold's first impulse was to point it out to Lady Helen. His second to watch his cousin for the next week or two, and see whether there seemed to be any reason for his fears—fears which he knew he should rather allay than excite, unless some real mischief existed, which ought to be repelled. Helen was the last person in the world that he would like to pain; and he knew well how quietly but how sincerely she would feel for herself and her father, should such suspicions, founded or unfounded, be excited. Harold Falcon knew little of her thoughts at that moment, or he

would scarcely have waited till they reached the terrace to express them.

When they arrived at the second terrace, which was still another flight of long steps from the plateau on which the Castle stood, they found Hawkestone standing at the western angle, looking over the beautiful scene of wood and water, and so unobservant of everything else, that they came upon him almost unperceived. It was impossible not to notice the soft melancholy which pervaded his fine face as he looked over the vale and watched the sun going down behind the woodlands, now clothed in all the beauty of their autumnal dress. It was equally impossible not to see the forced smile with which he greeted them, and made a remark upon the exquisite scenery which had evidently affected him so painfully.

Lady Helen grasped her cousin's arm, and looked intelligently at him, while she spoke cheerfully enough.

'I thought you were out shooting, Hawkestone, with the duke and Mr. Millbank.'

'No; I changed my mind. I sent Cartridge with them to show them the best beat; but I had a little headache. By-the-way, Harold, you might have gone, only the duke doesn't like shooting with more than two besides himself, and I really meant going.'

'Quite right too—that's one too many. I'll be hanged if I think we shall ever have such fun again as you and I used to have with Cartridge, in the holidays, when we came home from Eton. My poor father always said you spoilt me for any good I should do afterwards, unless I meant to——' and here Harold pulled up suddenly as if the recollection of his father's opinion was not calculated to give universal satisfaction to his cousins. They saw his embarrassment and held their tongues.

'Done anything, Harold, besides catching these trout which I see in Helen's basket? There are some good ones among them, nearly a pound weight I should think;' and he looked into the fishing basket which Lady Helen had just taken up by the strap.

'Yes; I went out schooling on the new horse for my uncle. He'll make a magnificent hunter by the end of the cubbing season, if you think he'll be quiet enough

for him. If not, you'd better take him yourself;' but instead of replying as he once would have done, he smiled good-humouredly but faintly, and turned round towards the house.

'We'd better walk on,' said Lady Helen, 'it begins to be chilly, and not very far from dinner-time; the dressing-bell will ring by the time we reach the Castle.' And here Lady Helen walked off at a brisk pace, followed by Lord Hawkestone and Harold.

Her ladyship reached the plateau on which the house stood considerably in advance of the two gentlemen. They seemed in no great hurry; which, when we take into consideration the relative difference in time destined to *toilette*, between ladies and gentlemen, may not be surprising. Yet it could scarcely be so, for she lingered at the door by which they were about to enter.

Lord Hawkestone went off to one of the windows, by which he entered; Harold joined his cousin.

'Now, Harold, tell me do you notice anything in Hawkestone, or is it fancy on my part?' Harold had noticed already that he was lacking in tone, vigour, elasticity—in fact that five or six years had done the work of many, and just now he had fancied something more. Harold did not think so much of the difficulty of breathing which he had observed, as of Hawkestone's anxiety to conceal it.

'Country life, and absence of excitement. He doesn't look quite so strong as usual: but I see nothing to be alarmed at.'

'But don't you see that he cares so little about his usual occupations? he scarcely ever shoots, and exercise seems altogether distasteful to him.'

'Does my uncle think as you do, Helen?'

'I hardly know, but of course he would be less quick to notice it than I. And Hawkestone dislikes so much any allusion to his health.'

'Then don't tease him about it, Helen, and I'll take an opportunity of observing him more closely.'

'And what am I to tell papa?' said she as she stopped on the landing-place before she turned off to go to her own room.

'That I'm not going yet for some time ; and that—well, I'll stay as long as I can be of use to him : ' and he turned off the other way. There was just daylight left for them to dress for dinner.

The party was large, but not brilliant. The Duke of Poitiers, an honest, sensible, popular man ; a first-rate sportsman, a great judge of a horse, and—rarer still—of a hound : charitable, honourable, and a good husband and father—which are not great virtues for a man with a hundred thousand a-year, a charming wife, and a very handsome family : but not a wit. The duchess, middle-aged, very handsome, irreproachable in temper, character, and toilette. Lady Diana Belleville, their eldest daughter, in whose beautiful face that mixture of Saxon and Norman blood produced the best traits of both, large gray eyes, dark lashes and brows, standing out against the clear transparent skin and blue veins, with her straight well-formed features, and beautifully-shaped head. There were fine old country baronets and gentlemen, who supported the ducal interest on all occasions, talked poor-laws, turnpike trusts, and turnips. As these subjects were uninteresting to Hawkestone's old friends and brother-officers, they made play with the baronets' and country-gentlemen's daughters, who were curious on the matter of the county-ball, the race-meeting, and the *ou dits* to which the last season had given rise.

They were a good average set, in a large country-house, and all felt happy that Bitters was left behind somewhere. They could well forego the wit which made at least one person at table uncomfortable. They did not miss the astounding intellect of Highlow, who was quite regardless of the time or place in which he fired off his political epigrams, or the repartee of Barker, who, if he was not able to quarrel with somebody, managed invariably to set others by the ears. There was no astonishing lion to monopolise the conversation ; and if the duke was listened to with deference, it was certainly not because he roared louder than the rest of the company.

When Harold Falcon went to his room that night some serious considerations befell him, and amongst all of them his cousin Lord Hawkestone stood prominently

forward. Was he as ill as Lady Helen evidently thought him? He hoped not, he thought not, but he would ascertain. And Lady Helen herself? was it possible to know her as he did and live with her, sharing all her anxieties and cares for those they mutually loved, and not to love her? Was there anything so calculated to strengthen a bond which he rather desired to weaken; which he sought to break—and why? And when he came to this point in his considerations, he was staring vacantly into the once clear bright fire which had become necessary with the chill autumn nights, but which was dying out rapidly now. Ah, that why? was his secret; would there come a day when it could be revealed?

Of himself it was impossible not to think in connection with these subjects. How well he remembered the time when the possession of such a title and property would have saved him from apparent ruin, and might have been welcomed even at the sacrifice of such a cousin as Hawkestone. Yet, scarcely that: and now that he knew him so well, and how dear he was to his uncle and Helen, how gladly would he forego the possibility of such advantages to save them from a moment's pain. How changed, how modified must all his feelings be!

And so they were. The truth was, that if Hawkestone Castle ever had been a prize worth sighing for, it had ceased to be so now. Harold cared nothing at all about it. Circumstances had happened in his short life which made him indifferent to the considerations which urge most men, and should to some extent move all. His wishes seemed now to be bounded by very moderate wealth—wishes which had once sacrificed an honourable position, and the esteem of others, as well as of himself, to their attainment—wishes which had given him sleepless nights and harassing days, and had ended in disgrace and ruin, but for an escape on which he dreaded to dwell.

Should he stay at the Castle if his cousin's health was deranged? Could he help his uncle by doing so, without compromising himself or Lady Helen? Harold was not a vain person, and he scarcely could come to a con-

clusion that his cousin would fall in love with him, without—well, modest reserve forbids the conclusion of that sentence, and his case was past praying for. He felt a wound, not ‘as deep as a well, nor as wide as a church-door,’ but it would do. He did love Lady Helen. Would to God he could tell her so.





CHAPTER XX.

A COUNTRY-HOUSE IN SEASON.

AND Lady Helen herself, how did she feel it? Well, that evening not at all. Harold had taken himself off from the billiard-room, or the smoking-room, under the plea of getting up at six a.m. on the following morning to go out cub-hunting. Lady Helen having no hounds to look after, nor any valid excuse for early rising, excepting virtue and health, was caught by the duchess and Lady Di, and Fanny Millbank, and Miss Montessor, to arrange the details of an excursion to see a robber's cave at some distance from them. The cave was only eighty feet from the ground on the flat surface of red sandstone, and the robber was said to have jumped in or out, I don't know which; but there were the marks on the red sandstone where his horse had alighted. The duchess went early, as pattern duchesses should do, to her own room, not certainly to see the duke, who was playing whist in the smoking-room: but she left all the rest, who continued to tease Lady Helen about the horse they should ride, or which of the men should be told off to drive them, whenever the day of excursion should come. As Lady Helen said afterwards, from the length of time it took to settle, it might have been Wordsworth's excursion itself. At last all went but Lady Diana, that handsome girl, with her half-Norman, half-Saxon face, and she would stop behind.

To say that Lady Diana Belleville was in love with

Lord Hawkestone was to say what was not true. Still the gossips would say so.

'Well, and when's the young lord a-going to fetch his bride home, my lady?' said old Mrs. Twoshoes, a privileged pensioner of Lady Helen's.

'Where should he fetch her from, Mrs. Twoshoes?' inquires Lady Helen.

'Ay : but you'll know better than us old souls. Isn't it Lady Diana? Betty Gray tells me she's up at the Castle now.'

'That's rather as if she were coming to fetch him, granny,' replies Lady Helen, laughing at the conceit, which might have a little more truth in it than the other.

'Look, Mary, look, there's the Duchess of Poitiers, and Lady Diana Belleville, and there's Lord Hawkestone with his back to the horses,' shouts Miss Giggie, the bookseller's daughter at Silverford, a small town half-way between Hawkestone and the duke's residence, to her youngest sister ; and the two rush to the front, as the carriage drives rapidly by to the delight of all the young women in the town. 'Why don't he sit beside her?' says Mary, one of 'Nature's simple children.' 'I'm sure I should sit side beside him if I'd got a sweetheart.'

'Lor ! stupid, don't you know that the gentlemen always sit with their backs to the horses?'

'Well, then, why can't she sit with her back to the horses too? I'm sure she can't care much about him ;' saying which Miss Mary retired to her work once more.

The great world didn't talk quite so openly about it, although London society sometimes wondered when it was to be. The *Mole*, a newspaper supposed to be wonderfully informed by some tout on the confines of society, had hinted at such a thing ; and to this day the editor doesn't know how very narrowly he had escaped a horse-whipping. But there was, it must be admitted, a tacit understanding among the ladies Harriet and Jane, and the Misses Montessor and the Fanny Millbanks of the world, comprising scarcely the Ten Thousand that the *littérateurs* are so fond of talking about, that when Lady Di did not fall to Lord Hawkestone's share by right, she generally

found herself in his neighbourhood by tacit permission of the rest.

The families too were very intimate. Separated by only fourteen miles of pretty good road, of the same rank and wealth, enjoying the same pursuits, and with families growing up or grown up, it was the most natural thing in the world that their visits should be frequent. The duke loved hunting, better even than racing, and had taken the hounds in a wonderful dilemma in the —— country, where all the great men in England hunted, and had forgotten to pay for even the covers, so absorbed were they in the main business for which they all came to —— . It must not be supposed that it was for lack of money, for as soon as the duke had relieved them of their fears, and the previous manager of his responsibilities, they came down in greater force and form than usual. He only gave it up and came back to Silverthorn—such was the name of his place—where they cursed his hounds because they (the hounds) wanted to hunt, and his huntsman because he wanted to let them, and his grace because he wouldn't go forward to a hallo two miles off before he had killed the fox he had brought ten miles with him to what they called that d—d forest. Being a fashionable country it was soon taken by a racing banker, who had just retired with a good fortune and plenty of ready-money; and who, not finding the turf a letter of introduction to the ladies of the *haute volée*, determined upon trying the national sport, irrespective of expense, trouble, or abuse. In the language of a well-known turfite at Newmarket, Mr. Flash having failed with Warren was going to try Hunt.

Since that time the Duke of Poitiers had passed his winter chiefly at his own place, and was a constant attendant on the Hawkestone pack. One of their best meets was on the duke's property, and the hounds were never at Silverthorn without a large party in the house to meet Lord Falconberg and his family. They shot together in the season on their return from Scotland, and when the covers of either were to be beaten, they were always to be found among the guests at the house of either. Above all things, they were both of them what they called old-fashioned Whigs; a bond of union which

always seems to smell of Charles Fox, but without one of the characteristics of that erratic statesman, but his *bouhémie* and his good taste for a dinner.

The party, of which the duke and duchess had formed a part, had gone to fresh pastures. Others had come in their place. There had been more partridge-shooting, more fishing, and a day or two's cub-hunting, which had quite repaid even Captain Prestowe for the trouble of turning out a little earlier than at Melton. Harold was still there ; and though he had kept watch and ward, with the hope of disabusing Helen's mind of her preconceived notions, and of comforting the old peer, who, it was evident, shared them, he had as yet detected nothing in Lord Hawkestone, nothing more than a little delicacy which might be the effect of changed habits or ordinary causes. The season had not stood still, and though the sun shone brightly into Harold's windows, the beginning of October was at hand.

'Hawkestone,' said Harold Falcon, bursting into his cousin's room on the morning in question about eight o'clock, 'are you coming over to the pheasant covers? The hounds are to be there at nine this morning, and I heard my uncle go down ten minutes ago ; he knocked at my door.' Hawkestone was still in bed, but awake, and answered, 'What's o'clock, Harold?' at the same time ringing his bell. 'Eight ! I felt so tired I thought it could scarcely be time to get up yet. Pull the blinds up, that's a good fellow.'

'Do you sleep with your window open? Your room feels cold.'

'Cold ! No ; I don't know that the window's open ; and I don't feel cold. On the contrary, I perspire so much at night that I wish there was no fire in the room.' And Lord Hawkestone's valet came in and began to prepare his room. Harold Falcon went out, saying,—

'We'll keep the breakfast, as Helen's going to ride, and won't be down till the last moment, I dare say.'

A handsome bridge ran from the one side of the park to the other, where the hounds were to meet ; so that the distance from the house to the covers they were going to draw was scarcely a mile. There was no necessity for hurrying. The meet was likely to be a family party, as

they did not profess to begin till the first of November in the open. Half-a-dozen farmers, who wanted to school their horses, might join them, in fact were sure to do so ; as many county gentlemen in shooting jackets (their sons were once more at Eton and Harrow) would come out to have a look at the master and his young entries, and to get some condition into the old horse, or to try the new one. There would be no scarlet, except in the servants ; and the whole affair would be one of business—to teach hounds and rattle the foxes, with the chance of a run, if it happened to fall in their way.

‘Ah, Helen, this is charming,’ said Lord Falconberg, coming in to find his daughter already dressed and at the top of the table, with Harold and half-a-dozen men making the most of their time.

‘Miss Linton and Lady Fanny, the pony-carriage is ordered for you, as you intend riding to Silverford in the afternoon.’

‘Why were we not allowed to ride with Helen, Mr. Falcon?’ demanded one of the young ladies.

‘Because your brother assures me that your mare always runs away with hounds: and as he’s not here——’

‘That’s really too bad of Frank,’ said Lady Fanny Carysfort ; ‘he was short of horses last year himself, and I lent her to him to finish the season ; and his hands are so bad that she is inclined to rush at her fences. As to pulling, a child might ride her.’

‘I’ve no doubt of it,’ said Colonel Snaffles tauntingly ; ‘and as we shall be out again only five miles off at the end of the week, you shall ride her in spite of Carysfort, who is, as you say, a very bad horseman.’ Here there was a little good-humoured laughter, as Lady Fanny was not disposed to allow anyone to abuse her brother but herself.

‘I don’t say that, Colonel Snaffles : I only say it takes two to make a puller, and Frank’s hands are not quite so good as—well, whose shall I say——?’ Harold looked up at the *piquante* pretty little lady, who continued, ‘Oh, I wasn’t going to say yours, Mr. Falcon ; though I dare say you think that’s bad judgment on my part ; I meant to say Lord Hawkestone’s.’

'Then here he is to acknowledge the compliment,' as the door opened and he entered the breakfast-room.

Lord Hawkestone looked, as all well-made, gentlemanly-looking men do, better in leathers and tops than in any other dress. Not that I for my part underrate the value of a straight well-cut pair of trowsers, Hammond's or Story's; far from it. But from head to foot, a well-dressed horseman, who knows how to put on his clothes for that's a very essential part of the business), is a sight better worth looking at than the best loungee that ever woke the flags of Bond Street or St. James's with his Hoby's. If he has a leg that will hang from a saddle like the late James Mason, or the huntsman of Her Majesty's buckhounds, with the knack of making his boots meet his breeches in the same way, I should advise his following the example of Lord Falconberg and wearing nothing else, until evening compels him to change them. It is difficult to get up a morning leg and an evening leg, for they are as different as the late Lord Petersham's snuffs; but if I must choose between the two, I take my stand on the morning leg. Calves, be it spoken with reverence, are vulgar.

Mr. K—y, one of our best comic actors, was the occupant of a foreign railway carriage with a lady and her son. He slept well and soundly to all appearance the greater part of the journey. On some unexpected stoppage, the young gentleman, anxious to improve all opportunities of observation, remarked aloud—loud enough indeed to disturb the sleeper—'Ma, they're putting on calves behind.'

'There are a great many people,' said Mr. K—y, with great gravity, 'who would be glad to do the same; and went to sleep again. I am not one of those.'

'Now, ladies,' said Harold, 'shall I ring the bell for our carriage? You know the road, Miss Linton, after you get over the bridge? The hounds meet at the lower side of the cover, and we shall draw up wind. And lady Fanny, I'm sure you'll not be angry if I remind you that foxes have very quick ears, and don't like conversation.'

In a few minutes more they were all gone.

Nothing could be more beautiful than the morning.

‘Too gaudy for scent, I’m thinking, my lord,’ said Farmer Harrowgate, touching his hat to Lord Falconberg, ‘and a little east in the wind; but there’s been plenty o’ rain lately, so that it aint very dry. Don’t see none o’ them nasty cobwebs about neither.’

‘I don’t dislike a touch of east, Harrowgate; you’ll be glad to see Fearless again, he’s grown into a very handsome hound, and the best of that litter: they’re all very good too. Lord Hawkestone likes them much.’

‘Ah, my lord seems to take kindly to it. I never thought he’d like the trouble so much as you did. Always rode tremenjous too—him and Mr. Harold, ever since they was boys.’

‘Then to each of his old tenants, as they came up, Lord Falconberg had a kind word or two to say; and though the old peer had aged wonderfully in the last four or five years, in fact since the death of his children, still on horseback the change was less perceptible than elsewhere. His thin limbs clad in thick and loose buckskins, beautifully made and cleaned; his straight, well-cut top-boots, and the loose, strong black coat, with its broad skirts and outside pockets, rather concealed the stoop which was growing upon him; and his handsome aristocratic face and gray hair, almost white indeed, looked fresh-coloured and bright in the morning air. His beautiful seat showed well on a fine short-legged but thoroughbred horse, whose head was so placed that the old sportsman appeared to be playing with him, so craftily was he restrained by the light but firm hand that kept giving and taking as he pulled first on one side of his bit and then on the other.

Lady Helen, too, must not be overlooked in the crowd that began to assemble in greater numbers than they had expected. Beautifully dressed, beautifully mounted; she, too, had a kind word for her father’s friends, and managed to remember the names of their wives and daughters as easily as she did her old pensioners in the neighbouring village.

‘How does the horse carry you, Helen—nearly a handful, isn’t he?’ said her cousin, as he rode by her side—a gratification he never seemed willing to deny himself. He was nearly a handful, as she admitted; ‘but not too much, as she didn’t mean to ride the run if they had one.’

'You shall have another bridle on that horse another time. Your father quite agrees with me, that you should ride him in a gag and a martingal, putting the martingal on the curb-rein.'

'It was Mr. Curbs who thought it so dangerous; we spoke about it, at least Hawkestone did, the other day.'

'He's like all grooms: if they've never seen a thing, it can't be right. That's a good young horse of Hawkestone's, Helen. I've been schooling him, and I persuaded him to ride him to-day. I should like a run, though the country is so blind. He'd soon find him out. He looks better to-day.'

'But he's so indifferent about the whole thing, Harold. Look at my father, he's more life in him than Hawkestone now. Ah, here's the carriage.'

'What's the matter, Lady Fanny?' said Lord Hawkestone.

'The ponies pull much worse than the mare, and it's too bad of Frank, who only wants to have her himself by persuading papa that I can't ride her.'

In five minutes more the hounds were in cover, and while Lord Hawkestone jumped his new horse over the fence with his hounds, his Cousin Harold took the low stile in the corner nearest the river.

'That's right, Harold, put them to me; if we find, we've nobody but the new boy out this morning, and we'll try and force one or two out on the Grassfold side—we may get a gallop now,' and Hawkestone didn't seem to lack energy now at all events. The greater part of the field, some thirty or forty horsemen, headed by Lord Falconberg and Lady Helen, held on their way down the principal rides or on the outside, but so far back as to give the fox a chance of getting away.



CHAPTER XXI.

AN EARLY DAY WITH THE CUBS.



YOUNG foxhounds are troublesome things to deal with: riotous, vigorous, courageous, and ignorant. These are not meant for their names, by-the-way, which they well might be. It was a beautiful thing to see them dash here and there with an indifference to thorns and briars, while here and there stood one or more with ears erect, looking as if they were rather surprised at their friends, and then dashing off for a hundred yards or more, whenever they found an open spot for their gambols. 'War'hare:' cries the new boy, cracking his heavy thong; while the old lord and Lady Helen proceeded cautiously, the former taking note of the performance of his beauties, and marking some for distinction, in the hope of seeing them, in two seasons more, the perfection of what a hound should be. The real master, too, was at work with his head, and Harold was recording anything of notice for the evening's cigar, or the after-dinner conversation.

The scene was of great beauty. The night's spray hung still upon the leaves, as the dew upon the grass, though the sun was getting higher, and beginning to steal, here and there, through the red and brown autumnal tints. The ground game was quickly on the move, and it required all Harold's and young Jim's vigilance to keep the young drafts from occasional riot. Every now and then, too, a young cock, roused from his shelter, would rise through the branches, and fly to

the other end of the long cover, while his more astute companions ran stealthily through the grass into the ditches and hedgerows on either side.

'Tally-ho!' sings out the family doctor, about a hundred and fifty yards down the cover, where he had stationed himself well out of sight, by Lord Hawkestone's desire; prepared, as all doctors are, to ride as if his limbs belonged to his neighbours, and he was to have the setting of them. 'Tally-ho!' yells the doctor a second time, which was not responded to, as the wily fox held his course out of sight along a hedgerow as impervious to vision as in the height of summer.

Crash through the branches, however, came Lord Hawkestone, bringing with him two or three couple of his hounds, who immediately opened as they ran along the side of the cover, while the rest came joining in the chorus, hurried along by the joint efforts of Harold Falcon and young Jim. 'Hold up, stupid,' says the former, as his young horse, violent among the bushes, and endeavouring to get through, nearly falls on his head over some prostrate timber; 'get away to him, Galloper,' while Jim hustled down the ride to see which way he broke, if break he would. Lord Falconberg held up his whip, and kept the impatient spirits behind him in check. 'Steady, gentlemen, steady—we've only young ones out to-day; let's do the hunting first, you'll have time enough for the riding a month or two later.' Then there was a dead silence. 'Ah, he's back—I told you so—he'll not be out of these covers under half-an-hour, possibly not in double the time.' And then they trotted down the ride, keeping the hounds in sight. 'Hold hard, it's all the way back;' and in another moment the body of the hounds came racing through the brushwood down the river-side, while the field turned round, as eager to go the other way as they had just been to follow the reverse.

By the time Hawkestone and Harold and Jim had half tired their horses, when there had been at least four foxes on foot at different times, and when the young hounds had begun to settle, long after the crowd had become impatient, and when they had begun to talk about going home to dress for market, a Hallo! Away! was heard

from the very point at which Hawkestone had wished him to break towards Grassfold. The field turned along the first broad ride that presented itself. Lord Falconberg led his daughter at a pace that soon put a considerable distance between them and the broad-brimmed, red-nosed old fellows behind. The doctor was fighting his way through a grove of nut trees in full leaf, and seemed hopelessly planted; while Harold, performing his promise to the best of his ability, took one turn to bring up a refractory couple and a half, and leaving the rest of the laggards to Jim and luck, emerged over a very unpromising blackberry bush in full bearing, with his nose scratched and his cheek bleeding. 'So much for doing the new boy's duty, and letting Ned have a holiday to go to Silverford fair.'

There was no time for much consideration. On getting himself clear of the leaves, and his horse's hind legs of a hurdle which he had brought with him out of the blackberry bushes, the first thing that he saw was a hat, which he recognised, just disappearing over a stiff-bound fence, one field ahead of him. On the right were the twenty-five farmers, confined to a bridle-road, with Lady Helen at their head, Lord Falconberg himself having emerged from the crowd, and in the act of negotiating what looked like a gap, only because the rest of the fence was impracticable. The business is soon told, for it was soon over. Farmer Harrowgate's notions of scent were all wrong. The young hounds, led by a lady or two remarkable for pace, never spoke after being once on their fox, but ran for Grassfold as if tied to him. They had done their hunting in the Hawkestone covers; and though Harold with Linton, Millbank, and some of his friends, tried hard to catch them, they never decreased the distance between themselves and Lord Hawkestone by a hundred yards.

'Look at those hounds, Linton; straight for Grassfold. It must be an old one; the quickest thing I've ever seen. Wonderful entry, and how little tailing.'

'Never mind the hounds, Falcon; look at Hawkestone's chestnut!' And true enough he was performing over a difficult country after a fashion that betokened a good man was on his back.

But Harold's eyes were on the pack ; and while Linton and Millbank were looking at the chestnut, Harold was looking at the hounds. The leaders turned to the left, which gave him one chance more ; and while his late companions rode for a gate on the high ground, Harold, jumping an awkward staken-bound fence, sunk the hill at a pace that none but a thoroughbred one could accomplish, as the fox was pulled down in the next hedgerow.

He and his cousin were off their horses in no time, and the obsequies might almost have been performed by the time the field had arrived. Harold looked at Lord Hawkestone ; instead of the bright fresh colour which he had usually seen, he was surprised to remark a paleness so great that he could not help saying,

'Are you unwell, Hawkestone?'

'Not the least ; a little faint,' replied he, turning away from Lord Falconberg, who was on the other side of him. At the same time he looked at Harold intelligently, and blowing his horn, trotted gently forward.

'Where to now, Hawkestone?' said the latter, following him up, and seeing that his colour was returning.

'We'll go back and try the other side of our covers. They want well rattling between this and November. Thanks for the schooling you've given this horse, he's quite perfect. Yours looks as if he had been plating during the summer.'

'I've only two, my dear fellow, and I regard condition as the great secret of work. I ride them all the year round, and they are just as fit to go now as in February, and all the better for their summering. There's no summering equal to gentle exercise.'

'And yet Harold doesn't object to galloping with me,' said Lady Helen, laughing, as she rode up, 'when the road is like iron.'

'Because I always take one of Hawkestone's horses. I suppose you're going home now. We shall not get another gallop to-day, and are going to have an hour's turn at business in the big woods.' Saying which Lord Hawkestone and Harold trotted off with about half-a-dozen of their staunchest adherents—among whom were not Linton and Millbank—to find another fox in their nursery.

Lord Falconberg hesitated a moment, and then followed the hounds down to the big woods, where they had an hour's hunting and a kill among themselves—quite a family party, and a very dangerous one to the foxes.

'Where's Linton?' said Lord Hawkestone—passing along the hall with a flat candlestick—to Harold, who was coming the other way.

'Playing billiards with Colonel Montessor.' The colonel was a proficient, having commanded a regiment in India which was always engaged in fighting, pig-sticking, or billiards; and equally adept at all three.

'Then he's happy. He quite delights in losing his money, and the receiver-general never fails to accommodate him. Where are Millbank and Carruthers?'

'They're in the smoking-room with Tommy Dashwood. I'm going to my room to fetch them some of those large Trabucos.'

'Are they all gone out of the drawing-room?' inquired Lord Hawkestone, after a pause. 'You're not going into *écarté* with Carruthers and Millbank?'

'Not I,' said Harold. 'I lost ten pounds yesterday, and I find it quite enough for such an amateur as I. I should think it was like taking a header to a man who never washed.'

'Time has been, old fellow,' said the other. 'Come to my room and let's have a chat. Bring a cigar or two up; Helen don't mind it, and nobody else knows anything about it.' Saying which he walked up stairs slowly, and Harold joined him in ten minutes' time.

'How well those hounds behaved to-day, Harold.'

Harold Falcon was rather thoughtful, but said 'Yes' very deliberately.

'Confound it, Harold, you don't seem to think so. You're not thinking of your nose, though it was rough work on that lower side.'

'Well, I really do think so. That draft from the Badminton kennel is excellent, and I like your system of breeding from big hounds. This is a strong country, and requires plenty of bone as well as courage.' Then Harold drew his chair up to his cousin's fire, and made himself comfortable. 'Lend me one of your smoking jackets; that's capital. I'm glad you like your new horse. You've

a good stud to begin the season. It's just the stud I should like. Like our clothes, it would fit either of us.'

'I'm glad of it, Harold.'

'When you're in the thick of it, I shall bring one more from Tilbury's, and see how near I can get to you. I was a field off this morning watching you, when the hounds swung round to my left. But, tell me, you were not quite well?' and Harold looked straight at his cousin.

'Ah, Harold, you detected it. Don't say anything about it to Helen or my father. I made up my mind to trust you; so let's have it out now. Don't bring any horses down from Tilbury's. Come and ride mine.'

'But my dear Hawkestone;' and leaning forward on the arms of the chair, Harold looked very earnestly at his cousin.

'Listen, Harold—keep my counsel—I must go abroad the end of October or in November. It may be nothing; and I shall probably return all right. I wish my father to be spared all uneasiness, and Helen too, as long as possible. I would take you with me, Harold, but we want you here. You won't leave the old man, Harold, nor Nelly, will you?' Hawkestone seldom called her Nelly; never, indeed, but upon rare occasions of affectionate exhibition. Harold could scarcely answer, so unexpected was the conversation—but he did say,

'No. I'll not leave them: but tell me more. Have you seen anyone? What are your reasons for wishing to go?' And the contending emotions which assailed Harold Falcon at once were not even explicable to his own heart. Sorrow had the first place, however, and a sense of terrible embarrassment mounted the colour to his face.

'Now don't fidget about it, that's a good fellow, and I'll tell you all about it. I have seen some one, and I think it better to act on his advice.'

'Cardiac or Lobel?'

'Neither the one nor the other. Cardiac would never have told me, nor you, nor my father, nor Helen; but he would have told everybody else. Lobel would have told none of us. He's the man who thinks you may eat ices, but you should have the chill taken off. No. I want the truth, and I went to Bluster.'

'Who has made a large fortune by frightening people, and then pretending to cure them,' said Harold, smoking easily to all appearance, but with his heart beating with anxiety. 'What did he say?'

'He told me what I feel to be true: that one lung is much disorganised, which means diseased, I presume; and that my days are numbered.'

Harold rose from his seat, unable to speak, and took his cousin's hands in his own. Twice he tried, but could say nothing. Lord Hawkestone seemed but little affected as he told his story, and continued to smoke as calmly as if he had never heard the startling intelligence, or was talking of some one else. 'There, sit down,' continued he, with a cheerful smile, 'don't be too much alarmed. He told me the worst: that I might live years with care and good luck, but **that I** might be summoned at a shorter notice. Come, Harold, cheer up, my old friend,' and as he spoke, Lord Hawkestone got up, and leaning over the back of his chair, put his arms affectionately over Harold's shoulders, whose grief almost burst forth in sobs. 'I shall live long enough now to give you all some trouble; but it's right you should know your position—better for us all. Stop here and take care of your uncle and cheer Nelly: no one can do it better.' Here they both stood up on the hearth. 'And I say, Harold, let me ride, and shoot, and look well or ill, as I can. You know my secret—war' babblers, as we say in the kennel—and God bless you, old boy.'

If ever a man felt miserable at a possibility, it was Harold Falcon at the possibility of becoming an earl.





CHAPTER XXII.

EARLY MORNING IN ST. JAMES'S.

TIME never stands still ; and it did so no more with the family of Falconberg than with other people. Well-born wealth gets a few privileges out of the world, but this is one of the exceptions to that general rule, and common people ought to make the most of it. Great men are as subject to pain of body and of mind as little people, though not of the same kind ; but they are obliged to come into this world and go out of it quite independently of their own wills or ways. I had forgotten—not quite—wealth will assist in life-prolonging, though it has no effect on life-producing : dirt, squalor, and misery seeming to claim as its own the blessings of a numerous offspring. If the water-rates, or the rest of his creditors, are his enemies, Giles the curate does look ashamed when he goes to speak with them in the gate, if he has more mouths than he has bread for ; and though there is nothing in our religion from which some consolation may not be derived, if properly applied, the application of that full quiver to Giles's case, has given him less satisfaction than it ought to have done, when he has considered the necessity of maintaining them. I have no doubt that when Providence sends mouths it sends loaves. But if I get all the mouths and you get all the bread—where are we ?

Now the fact is that time did not stand still for the Falconbergs, but their wealth had done something for them in the matter of that other case which we mentioned.

It had prolonged Lord Hawkestone's life in spite of some very strong opinions formed by the physicians, and a certain amount of indifference to his own case exhibited by the young noble himself. He had been abroad every winter, but he never would go till later than the orders given. He would go out hunting and take his chance of getting wet; and he would ride much harder and much farther than he ought to do; until he brought on that cough with its bad symptoms, and that faintness, which he was particularly ordered to avoid. He liked to have a day's cover-shooting, and to look up the woodcocks for which their woods were notorious; and which birds, as the parson of his parish (a fine sportsman as well as a divine) informed him, did not come till the lessons were in Daniel—in other words, in November.

Now what was to be done with a man of this sort? The best that could be made of Lord Hawkestone by his sister and his Cousin Harold was a moderate valetudinarian from April to November.

It was April now. Lord Falconberg was just come to town with his people, which consisted still of Harold and Lady Helen, and a host of retainers. He looks older, and has one source of regret which affects him deeply; as deeply as exterior circumstances can well affect such a man. Besides and beyond the delicate health of his eldest, and now only son, neither Lady Helen nor Harold will marry. They have both told him so at odd times; much to his disgust. His first wish was that they should marry one another. But he was much too delicate to hint at such a thing; and feeling conscious of his desire upon the subject, he had not pressed Harold as much as he otherwise might have done, to come and live with them. That gentleman, therefore, was a guest when he pleased, and as often as he pleased, which was at least nine months out of the twelve. But he still kept that little place which had come to him with his aunt's money, not very far from London.

When Lord Falconberg found that Harold did not propose to Helen, but that all their liking for each other was a cousinly or Platonic regard, he wondered why neither of them would marry anybody else. Lady Helen was still as handsome as ever. Farina had proposed, and

been refused. He was a marquis, with a fine fortune, as much as Lord Falconberg had himself; but he was a great fool, and Harold hated the sight of him; which seemed quite enough to set Helen against him. She told Harold all about it, the old man knew, and the two schemers were unanimous in discarding the match of the season. But it was not so with Lord Belleville. They all liked him, and Harold and he were as intimate as ever. And they all spoke highly of him; but Helen would have nothing to say to him, though at this moment she was closeted with Lady Diana in Grosvenor-square; and there were half-a-dozen more hopelessly rejected. Hawkestone only made his health an excuse, which might have been accepted in peace and with resignation by the old peer, if he could but have seen Harold inclined to settle down. 'And here he is, not old but getting on,' as he told the duke, who, being himself midway between Harold Falcon's age and that of his uncle, thought there was plenty of time.

'Yes, duke, there's plenty of time: if I was but sure of his marrying at all. Hawkestone's health is very precarious.' And here the good old peer dropped his voice, for he loved Hawkestone dearly, and he knew the duke had an inkling of some feeling of the kind on the part of Lady Diana. 'Hawkestone's life is very precarious; and if that — fellow George Falcon was to get the property I think I shouldn't rest in my grave.'

'And what has George done?' says the duke, giving his weight-carrying hunter a reminder with the spur that he wasn't so good a hack as he might be. 'I thought he was one of the steady-going sort, Falconberg. Took a good degree; and when I saw him last was as full of law as an egg's full of meat. He's not quite so lively as my friend Harold; but young stock throws back, and his heir might be very different from himself; more like his father or his uncle. I didn't even know that he was married.'

'Nor do I know it, but I suspect it; and I could have forgiven anything but a *mésalliance*. I have heard that he really is married to some foreign woman or other.' And very savage the earl looked at the reminiscence.

'The devil he is! What makes you think that?'

‘That sort of general report, which is not worth much, but which one can’t disregard. It came from the Temple, I fancy, and got to the ears of old Dryden, who is pretty clever at ferreting out a mystery.’

‘And infernally quick at finding a mare’s nest.’ And then the two jogged on to draw Buttercup Gorse for an afternoon fox, and remarked upon the failure of scent in a season so dry as the present. Of course Harold and Lord Hawkestone had heard of all this ; and the former especially had listened to it, and his uncle’s violent protests against it ; but as George had not been to Hawkestone or Grosvenor-square for a long time, it was not likely to be cleared up by direct explanation, a difficult process at all times ; especially so in the case before us. Harold at all events did not seem inclined to stir in the matter.

Bond Street was full in the morning considering the time of year, not very late in April. It was especially crowded opposite Long’s Hotel, and there stood Harold Falcon, unable to cross for two large waggons, which leisurely proceeded towards Bruton Street, and a very neat drag which was pulled up against the curb-stone at Long’s. No man about town could fail to recognise the drag. It was drawn by four short-legged coaching-looking horses, worth from sixty to eighty pounds a-piece ; two roans, a dark bay, and a good nutmeg-gray. The harness was strong, well made, with a sufficiency of brass about it, and exceedingly well cleaned, and an early spring-flower adorned each horse’s head-piece on the outside of the blinkers. The coach itself was rather low, and combined strength with lightness and appearance ; notwithstanding which it was what Sir St. V—C— was pleased to call ‘coaching all over.’ It was a dark brown, picked out with red, not showing too much colour ; and on the panels and boots was a plain crest. When Harold detected what had been wittily called the ‘clerical tile and the fighting bird’—but which was a bishop’s mitre and a dove with an olive branch in his mouth—he looked towards the door of the hotel. Of course he saw his friend Carruthers flourishing a whip, which he had just caught, to the damage of one of Mr. Jubber’s wine-glasses (he had just taken the house), and to the hindrance of a respecta-

ble gentleman who was waiting to get through the doorway.

Carruthers was not much altered, not more altered than a man should be who is married and has given up steeple-chasing, and taken to driving for an employment. Fatter of course, and redder; and at this moment given to a loud shawl of cashmere wound loosely round his neck.

'Why, Harold, when did you come to town?' said the ex-country gentleman, shaking him warmly by the hand; and it must be admitted that (money matters on one side) Harold had not a warmer admirer.

'I came up this morning from Egmont to Grosvenor Square; the earl and Lady Helen arrived last week.'

'And how's Hawkestone? Is he coming home soon?'

'Much better, I believe; he talks of coming back immediately. He hates the continent. But nobody knows how he really is; for he always makes the best of himself—he's so anxious to get home. Where are you going?'

'Down to Pinner to look at some horses. You'd better come too. There's Belleville and Childers and two or three men want to look at some horses of Mason's. You'd better come.' Saying which he took hold of the reins and prepared to mount.

'Not to-day, Dick; I want to go to the club for some letters.'

'Nasty place to get away from, this,' said Dick, once more looking round for his passengers. 'I wonder when it'll occur to any of those wiseacres, the commissioners, that this part of Bond Street wants widening. Who the d—l is to drive a team through here at five o'clock in the afternoon in June?'

'If railroads prosper as they have done there'll soon be no drags to drive, nor gentlemen to drive them. I came up on the Slough line this morning, and we did a mile a minute. In a very short time the street will be quite wide enough for all the drags that will go through it. How are Lady Margaret and the children?'

'All right, thanks. They come to town next month.'

'And the Rover?'

'Fresh as paint. I sold him last week for five and twenty pounds.'

'Stingy beggar,' said Harold, pursuing his way towards St. James's Street, but soliloquising, 'stingy beggar, I'd have given him the money myself to have turned him out, for old acquaintance' sake.'

When Harold walked down St. James's Street, his mind turned back to other days. How different was he, how little changed everything around him. The Guards' club-house was transplanted to Pall Mall; and Crockford's, where he had lost so many hundreds, was closed. The legislature, of which we are so proud, had taken some very decisive steps towards making Young England less extravagant in its taste for gambling. To be sure it has failed, and has only turned into fresh channels the waters that once ran through Crockford's, Liley's, and the numerous houses, where, in defiance of public opinion, men played. Since those days we have become virtuous. The open profession of a gamester is illegal; and anybody may ascertain that fact who will visit Hyde Park, or the rooms at Newmarket, or Tattersall's, or the race-meetings of England in general. The dirty little boys without money may not breathe upon the glasses, it is true; while the sweet little dears who have plenty may walk up, and assist at the show. This was a change, and Harold saw but one way of ruining himself now, where there had been several. He saw however Young Strutt going down in his bearskin, and he thought of himself when he first joined; and was highly delighted that he had got as well out of his troubles as he had. At the end of some ten years he was still paying the interest or the principal of the debts he had contracted; but they were being paid, honourably, and they still left him an income to live upon: thanks to his old aunt. As he thought of this, his step grew lighter, and he stopped for a moment to look at the caricatures in Sams' window, which exhibited some of his own friends in a very flattering light.

As he turned round the corner into St. James's Square, he was stopped by the lively members of the new club, 'the Flag.' To judge by appearances he must have been a great favourite.

'Harold, my boy, how are ye?' said Major McMahon; 'you're just in time for lunch,' with which he seized him

by both hands, to a certain extent monopolising those members. At the same time he was surrounded.

'The very man,' says Strait Hare to his friend Brownlock. 'Falcon, you'll go down to the Woolwich meeting to-morrow; you can go on the drag. Slime is going to ride.' Harold had partly released himself by this time.

'It would be more to the purpose to tell me who's going to drive;' and then he passed up the steps into the club, followed by an old acquaintance or two, who wanted to talk to him.

'Bring a biscuit and some sherry here. Have you any news, Falcon?'

'None whatever. They say that Carfax will be returned for Dumbleton; and that it will cost him six thousand. The last man spent five, and was hardly used. He lost his seat for bribing.'

'Bribing!' and the speaker's face was illumined with virtuous indignation.

'Yes; not high enough. There are places, you know, where they settle beforehand who's to have it; I hear that Carfax has arranged to have Dumbleton at that money, if he will close the bargain at once. That's the last political *ou dit*. But I hear nothing at Egmont.' He was talking to his old friend Barrington.

'Then why not give it up? Lord Falconberg hates it; I heard him say so.'

'I must live somewhere—at least I must have somewhere to live. Besides, Lord Falconberg and Lady Helen like to have a place to run down to out of town. You'd better come and see us there—before Hawkestone comes home, or there will be no bed-room for you.'

'What's become of Hawkestone? Is he better?'

'He says so; I should fancy he was. But he's so imprudent. Just now he's in Italy, coming over the Simplon I believe, or else to Lucerne by Altorf, I don't know which. We expect him this month. It's too soon.'

'Somerville,' said a smart-looking light cavalry man on the steps of the Flag, 'who was that very handsome man who went into the club with Barrington and McMahon just now? Wonderfully good-looking fellow.'

'Don't you know? That was Falcon.'

'What! Falcon who was in the Guards?'

'Yes, that's the man. Did you see Slime? When Falcon came to grief in the Guards they say that a thousand would have saved him. Well, Slime was rolling in bank-botes, and a very feather-bed sort of look it gives him; so Collingwood proposed to Slime to lend him the money on an emergency.' To be sure the thousand would not have saved him, but Slime didn't know that.'

'Of course he wouldn't do it,' said the light-cavalry man, who had had some experience of that kind, though the light-cavalry are very good in bearing one another's burdens.

'Not he—he allowed him to be arrested on the steps of his own lodgings in Maddox Street. Falcon didn't know of Collingwood's application. He would not apply to Lord Falconberg nor to Hawkestone, either of whom would have given him ten times the money. I suppose he didn't like to do so, and Hawkestone was out of town. At that time you know he had four cousins alive and well between him and the title, now he has but one, and that a most precarious life. I should think Slime was good for five thousand to-day on Falcon's I. O. U.'

'Yes, if he carried interest enough. Stingy beggar,' added the smart-looking cavalry officer. So there was more than one stingy beggar about on that morning in April.

When Harold had finished his sherry and biscuits, and recruited his ill-informed mind with the *on dits* of the day, of which he heard nothing at Egmont, as he had said, he asked for his letters and walked out of the Flag. While he had been there, Lady Helen had had a visit too in Grosvenor Square. Lady Diana Belleville had come early to see her friend, and finding Lord Falconberg gone to a meeting at the premier's, to see whether a cabinet minister's official residence was not paved with good intentions equally with another rather notorious place, she stayed to lunch.

The interesting regard which was attributed to Mr. Slime will not stand out in such prominence when we consider that the fault, though gross enough, is not so uncommon as may be supposed. Slime acted by his

instincts of the rat, which deserts a fallen house, it has been said. His thousand would have been useless, had he offered it, we know ; and it was far better that Harold should have borne his own burden, if he did not choose to give one end of it to his own family. There were plenty more besides Slime that knew of his difficulties, but none of them, that we heard of, came to the rescue. All we can say for Collingwood himself is that he was hard-up ; so were some others, which Slime was not.





CHAPTER XXIII.

OUR RELIGIOUS EXERCISES.

SOME few years before the time of which I am writing, and about seven and thirty years before our own, there was a strong religious movement in Oxford. I say in Oxford; for although it soon began to pervade other parts of England,—as what extravagance will not?—it was so much more Oxonian in its locality and tone, as to be even distinguished by one name, among many others, as the Oxford Movement. Eminently prolific of good and evil, the former predominating.

Beyond this it was Puseyite, Newmianical, Anglo-Catholic, High Church, and Ritualistic. It was difficult to say what it was not, according to the tenets or prejudices of its denominators. Its earliest professors were remarkable for many things not before understood in the university. It met with favour from neither the old orthodox divine of the Common Room—who liked its port and its piquet, and who limited himself to a certain number of chapel attendances, lest he should by voluntary religious exercise be considered to savour of Popery; a new feature in that obligating creed,—nor from the undergraduate, who, whatever penance he might imagine that he suffered by the Oxford *Curriculum*, had no idea of making a sacrifice of his personal self-indulgence part of his religious profession, any more than of his practice.

Its first professors, some of them, I say, were remarkable for shining ability, great logical acuteness, much learning, and deep thought. They were also endowed

with perseverance and logical courage to carry out to its fullest extent their crotchets ; and having embarked on a special voyage, were not to be daunted by the dangers that beset them when they got amongst the breakers. Hence came a great loss to a good cause ; the loss of men to the Protestant Church, whose zeal and talents could ill be spared. There are always men to follow a lead, and those who had themselves gone thus astray, drew some weak followers after them. This was sure to be the case. For just as Charles Dickens may be regarded as the greatest enemy the English language has ever had, by the host of servile imitators his excellence has procured for him, and who have not been able to distinguish his faults from his virtues ; so that smaller and less capable herd of imitators have mistaken the weak points of the original seceders for their excellence, and have left the Church little to regret in their secession, beyond the sorrow she feels for their own misadventure.

The sacred spring, however, from which these troubled waters flowed, was anything but dried up ; and in process of time it has poured forth a stream, which, with all its obstacles and impediments, and the natural impurities of the soil through which it runs, is fertilising and rendering productive vast plains, which were before this but scantily benefited by religious irrigation. In plain language, Puseyism, or Ritualism, or whatever you may choose to call that movement in our Church which originated with Oxford some two-and-thirty years ago, has given rise to an amount of work and sentiment—call it excitement if you will—which has been universally advantageous. Puseyism has done good, a great amount of good. It has taught men to think, and sent men out to work ; it has revived in its integrity the old Parochial system, it has brought to our door (or taken us to theirs) the poor, the ignorant, the unwise. It has promulgated the best charity, love for God through our fellow-creatures. So we must not laugh at its absurdities, for it has them ; nor confound its unwise, and in many cases insincere, advocates with those men and women whose hearts are in their work, and who, distinguishing the corn from the chaff, are willing to let both grow to the harvest lest they should root up the good with the bad.

‘Hallo! look at Lenten,’ says young Wildboys of Ch. Ch.; ‘don’t suppose he ever had a bath in his life.’

‘Nor a bottle of champagne,’ adds Chaffinch, of Merton, as that erudite and cadaverous, but rather slovenly and unworldly, gentleman the Reverend Benedict Lenten walks up the hall, with his hands in front of him, a pious contrast to his pious friend the Reverend Amos Kitten, who affects the innocence of youth and the playfulness of girlhood, as a becoming mark of his Anglo-Saxonism.

‘Great expense of candles there, Goldstick,’ says the Honourable Rigby Passenham, who has lately taken to going to church and is very observant.

‘Yes,’ says Lord Goldstick; ‘but you wait a bit, and you’ll hear a magnificent “credo;” and if we have that anthem of Montem Smith’s you’ll be delighted.’

‘Who’s that just come in?’

‘That’s Pulham, the man who had to leave the Flag for a turf robbery; and the good-looking man with him is young Spoonington, who ran away with old Covey’s wife.’

‘Well, he’s none the worse for coming to church,’ says the newly-converted Passenham, whose reflection kept pace with his observation. ‘Look at those black women.’

‘I don’t see any black women,’ says Goldstick.

‘There; near the reading-desk, with curious head-dresses; look as if they were bald.’ And true enough some curious specimens of Anglican conventualism were there.

‘Those are the *Sœurs de Charité*,’ says Goldstick again, who was getting tired.

‘By Jove! but I say, old fellow, that’s rather strong, isn’t it? Belgian, or something Catholic?’ Passenham was not yet up in the business.

‘We’re all Catholic, too,’ replies Goldstick, whom long practice had made more *au fait* at the language, and who, indeed, had more sense than the other, and was rather amused at his friend’s mystification. ‘We’re all Catholics.’

‘Ah, yes; I see; so we are, to be sure, since the Reformation.’

‘This is a new light, Mary, dear,’ says a lady in the body of the church opposite the altar. ‘What a beautiful altar-cloth; and do look at those vestments, why they’re real jewels.’

'—sh, ma, dear !' Ma dear spoke a little above high-church pitch. 'That's the diamond that was given by Lady Sophia Crosspatch ; it was sewn into the cross at the back of the chasuble.'

'What's a chasuble, Mary?'

'Well, I don't know exactly ; but it's absolutely necessary, Mr. Longfast says, to make the services complete.'

And that's the way the world goes on. But I know Goldstick would not come but for the music, nor Passenham but for Goldstick. Pulham is not bored by the service, and Spoonington is balancing accounts by his attendance. Mary's mamma is not altogether at her ease ; but Mary herself sees an all-sufficient reason for self-denial, early rising, alms-giving, and a mild good-humour in the adornment of her favourite curate, Mr. Longfast, in stoles, chasubles, albs, copes, and a flowery garment, with a cross of four feet long.

It ought to be remarked that a great many persons who allow their virtues to begin here do not limit them to these externals of propriety.

The position of the Church may account for the conversation which was taking place in Grosvenor Square, while Harold Falcon was lounging about Bond Street and the clubs.

Lady Helen sat in a handsome *prie-Dieu* in her own room, and opposite to her Lady Diana was reclining in a comfortable arm-chair. A little fire gave additional warmth to the room, well carpeted and curtained, and furnished with all the luxuries which well-disposed wealth could procure. There was an ormolu cabinet of very handsome workmanship ; some beautiful specimens of old Sevres china, of which she was very fond ; some cabinet pictures, gems which had been given to her by Lord Hawkestone ; and there was an utter freedom from all the fopperies of upholstery which were then so common, and which were unfortunately taking an ecclesiastical turn. Altars, crucifixes, and statuettes of virgins, saints, or martyrs, were wanting ; yet Lady Helen Falcon was a very good and a very religious woman.

'And do you go regularly, Helen, every Thursday to your district?' inquired Lady Diana, whose bonnet was

lying on a chair near her, and whose beautiful fair hair was floating about, as it sometimes did in those days, without any suspicion of her being a bigamist, poisoner, or even a malicious slanderer.

‘Always; unless something extraordinary occurs to prevent me.’

‘And where do you dress, dear?’

‘Where do I dress?’ repeated Lady Helen, not quite understanding the question; ‘what do you mean, Di?’

‘I mean,’ said the laughing lady, ‘where do you put on your black serge dress, which all you Sisters of Charity wear when you go visiting?’

‘But I don’t wear black serge, my dear,’ replied the other.

‘Oh, I don’t think it’s anything without the dress, Helen. I shouldn’t feel half charitable—no, I don’t mean that—I mean half up to the work.’

‘Perhaps not; I dare say some ladies do not: and then Mr. Carfax (he was the brother of the Member for the corrupt borough of Dumbleton) encourages them to enter the order. It never occurs to me that I should do more good in one colour than another.’

‘But it’s so becoming, Helen, dear.’

‘Not to dark people like me, Di,’ said Lady Helen, laughing, ‘though it might suit you.’

‘And who are the other Sisters?’

‘But I’m not a Sister. Of course, as you will understand, all the Sisters are light-haired blonde beauties.’

‘Well, the other ladies who assist in the district visiting?’

‘Some are friends of our own—the Carletons, Mrs. Melville, Dora Shakerley, Lady Margaret, and half-a-dozen more.’

‘You must have quite a jollification. And are they all of that class?’

‘Not entirely; there’s Mrs. Panns, the ironmonger, and——’

‘That must be rather a bore, dear. Does she dress in serge?’

‘Not at all a bore, dear,’ said Lady Helen, answering the first part of her friend’s speech. ‘She doesn’t dress in serge, and she often goes with me. She’s a very good

woman, and does a great deal of good. I think I prefer Mrs. Panns to any of them. I found out her trade by her getting a quantity of kitchen utensils for the poor old women at cost price. She made no secret of her business, for she told us all that her husband would provide them for next to nothing.'

'And do you think Mr. Carfax would take me? I should so like to do some good, Helen; one would go into society with such an easy conscience.'

'I don't think he'd care about the compromise, dear; but as we must go into society, and live like other people, it's as well to have regular times for doing other duties. One can't be always out of the world, and one ought not to be always in it.'

'Then I'll go to Mr. Carfax to-morrow, if mamma will let me; and I shall ask for permission to enter the order.'

'And if you find it becoming, let us see you in your dress, Di. We expect Hawkestone home in a short time, and he'll be glad to see you.'

'He will?' said the girl, unconsciously betraying her interest in Lord Hawkestone's opinion by getting up and kissing Lady Helen.

'There's nothing he likes so much as self-denial, or self-sacrifice of any kind, in woman, Di; but I think he'd prefer it without the serge.' And there is no knowing how far the confidences might have extended had not the door opened, and Harold Falcon been announced.

Harold Falcon put a stop to an interesting conversation, which exhibited the sentiments of two ladies, identical in result, but somewhat different in principle. He was always a welcome guest at his uncle's, as the reader knows, and no less to Lady Helen than to the rest of the circle. He looked at present out of sorts, rather than spirits. These latter were never very high. In that respect he had changed very much. The devil-may-care ease of a *mauvais sujet* much in debt had given place to the sobriety of a well-to-do man of the world. Whether these highly bred rascals, who go about with their hands in other people's pockets, laugh at their own success as compared with the losses of their creditors, it is hard to say. A great many of them sleep very well, and are not surprised at it. They are rather surprised

that sleep should visit the temples of those to whom they owe so much, without the prospect of paying it.

‘Helen,’ and Harold Falcon had no scruples about making Lady Diana Belleville a confidante, hoping some assistance from her, ‘here’s a letter I found at the club, from Hawkestone; he’s on his way home—he does not say whether better or worse; but he’s going, as usual, to do the stupidest thing possible.’

‘And what must I do?’

‘Stop him. Write at once.’ A close observer would have seen colour and disappointment blend in Lady Di’s cheek as he said so.

‘Stop him? That’s not so easy; but is he worse?’ and Helen’s voice betrayed her anxiety.

‘No, not at all, that I know of; but he will attend to you. Stop him from going home by Holland. I know the country—cold and bleak at this season; let him come as usual, straight by Paris. There’s a railroad now from Strasburg, and he will travel with less fatigue.’

‘But if he will come through Holland, who’s to prevent him, Harold? Which way does he want to come?’

‘He speaks of Luxemburg and Cleves. I know the country well. He wants to see Nimeguen and some of the Dutch cities. Persuade him to come straight home.’ And Harold Falcon seemed to attach much importance to it.

‘But he’s not so easy of persuasion, you know.’ Still Harold urged her. He seemed much bent on his cousin’s avoiding Holland; and of course, after a few more words, Helen gave way. Lady Diana seconded Harold’s remonstrance; and so feebly that it was clear enough she had some reason for ardently desiring to succeed.

‘I’ll write by to-night’s post, Harold. I shall be so glad when he is home again. When are we to go down to Egmont?’

‘You’ll be my guests, Helen, at Easter. I’ve been down to put everything to rights for your reception. I’ve no room for you, Lady Di, or we should be delighted to see you—at least Helen would do the honours for me.’

‘Certainly, with the greatest pleasure, Di. But it’s a

terribly stupid place, according to Harold's account. This is our first visit.'

'We can send the horses down, and ride about the country. We've a new squire, too, who's worth seeing—Sir Samuel Cripplegate — otherwise there's literally nothing for ladies to do in a suburb.'

Croquet hadn't yet been invented.





CHAPTER XXIV.

THE JANSSENS. MOTHER AND SON.

TIME had also gone on with Bernhard Jansen and his daughter, and had changed to eternity with his wife. Frau Jansen had been dead some few years. No clock had stopped, no mysterious symbol had betokened the inopportune death of our old acquaintance. She was missed, when she did go; as anyone may be, without compliment in saying so. A dead wife may have been the tree that sheltered the family roof from storms or strokes, but she may too have represented the thunder-cloud that towers above us to pour down her vials of wrath, when the family atmosphere had reached the proper temperature.

Jansen felt her loss, when she did go; which is an euphemism upon my previous expression, 'Missed her.' So did Margaret. She had been kind to Margaret in her peculiar way; bent on her marrying a gentleman; indulgent, alas! to her faults; unconsciously her worst enemy. But, thank Heaven, children are not made to see indulgence in that light, whatever its results. Should you like to see a monster in human shape? I'll show you one—a phantom, a myth, I believe; as impossible, or more so, than Becky Sharp herself. It is the man or woman, of whatever age or condition, who turns round upon the authors of his or her existence, to cast in their teeth the half-venial selfishness of child-indulgence. I say nothing of faults, of other faults. No man of common sense can shut his eyes to facts; but few would re-

ject the burden of his own infirmities to put it on the shoulders of a parent's over-love.

So Margaret missed her mother, indeed. Years had softened old Jansen's nature, and made his bark less loud as he had one less to bite, or as he found a more ready submission to his will. Most men cease to fight when there is no resistance. The two lived on in the cottage near Cleves; and the changes that had taken place are easily told.

There was no Frau Jansen, I have already said. In the next place, the man Jansen was no longer a handicraftsman. He and his daughter together had enough to live upon well, in a comparatively cheap country, so he worked now only *en amateur*. He sometimes took a turn to great cities, to the picture-galleries, and the churches, and the curiosity-shops of his country; but he had ceased to work at his art, and money would not tempt him. He was getting old. The giant was still large, heavy, massive, but no longer quick of foot, nor upright. His hair was gray, and so were his shaggy eyebrows, and they overhung his still quick, intelligent eyes. He was much altered since he left England, and perhaps, but for his great height and size, he would not have been recognised as the old ring-man and money-lender, excepting by his intimates—Harold Falcon certainly among the number.

It was a regular April day, though May was about commencing, when old Jansen and his daughter sat in a neat little room, furnished in a less primitive style than usual among persons of Jansen's class in that neighbourhood. Being half English himself, with a daughter entirely so, he had transplanted his notions of comfort to his own country, as far as he could; for Cleves is in Guelderland, and he was a Dutchman. There was a good easy-chair of real English build, some warm curtains, which darkened the little room; he still clung to the stove instead of a fire-place; and there was a gaily-patterned carpet, not tacked down as in our houses, but let to lie loose on the floor, which was polished, and bore to be denuded of its covering, when summer was fairly set in. For the rest, Herr Jansen was occupied drawing, while Margaret was engaged on that never-fail-

ing source of self-congratulative German industry, a stocking.

‘Margaret,’ said the old man, ‘where’s the boy?’

‘He’s coming from Emmerich: I expect him at Cleves this afternoon. He should be home in an hour or two.’

‘Do you feel satisfied with his English? He seems to me to speak it scarcely so fluently since he left Düsseldorf.’

‘He had great advantages there,’ said the lady to her father; ‘he was always in the English clergyman’s house, excepting when studying at the gallery, or with his masters. Since then it may be that he speaks less easily.’ Herr Jansen and Margaret always conversed in English, excepting when occasion required—as before others, their neighbours—that they should speak German.

‘And what do you propose to do with him now?’

‘I think of doing as you recommended. Let him go to the English tutor at Heidelberg, and when old enough send him to England.’

‘Why not to the German university?’ inquired her father. ‘A university life is a great thing. He will acquire a knowledge of the world.’

‘But it is a very different world from the English world in which I hope he will move.’

‘You are bent on an English career for him?’

‘I am. I have no other wish. You said you thought it might be gratified.’

‘I think so still. But have you still so strong within you the same desire, the same hope, the same expectation? To me it seems vain. We have seen him no more, have heard of him no more. Give me the boy. Let him turn to art. It is still time. He has a fine perception: and here, at least, it is an honourable occupation.’ Herr Jansen seemed very much in earnest; as though he had a love for the boy of whom they spoke, and as of one for whom he meant to do all he could. Certainly Jansen’s notions of true greatness were centred in art, though he had tried a shorter road to money once on a time. But he was made up of mixed motives, not comprehensible to everyone, nor always to himself. Art, he said, was the highest sagacity, and money the highest necessity. But art did not pay such high wages as the devil, and once

he had changed his sides. Now that he did not want the wages, he should like to go back again. But how about the boy ?'

'Papa,' said Margaret, looking steadily at her knitting but letting her fingers cease their active employment, 'I owe you much, I wish I could pay you for the sorrow I have given you,—and here a tear fell upon her work,—'but I can't. Take my boy ; he is yours, if you will have him ; but you know my hopes, and they can only be accomplished in my way.'

'There, no more, Margaret ; I'll do my best for you. I'll go to England when I can, and see what is best to be done in the matter ; till then be still, my good girl. We've both had our sorrows. It's best to share them.'

Then he assiduously applied himself to his drawing, and bent over it more closely than usual ; and his daughter went on with her knitting.

'Don't you think it odd, now, that so many English travel, and so few come this way ? Nobody ever goes to Cleves, excepting the Dutch, that we ever heard of.'

'It's not the direct road anywhere. But I saw an Englishman yesterday at Herr Maival's at the *table d'hôte*. He was going to Amsterdam by Nimeguen, I think he said.'

'What was he like ?'

'A milord of course. However, he really was so. Lord Hawkestone, on his way from Italy. Why he should have preferred this road, I can't conceive. He was ill too ; at least he looked so.'

'Perhaps only tired. Lords do tire sometimes of pleasure—it's a privilege they enjoy in common with other people.'

'He might have gone by Strasburg. There's a railway to Paris. Perhaps if we get one, the beauties of the Clevischeberg might become known. There's no doubt that your countrymen—*yours* I mean, Margaret—might learn something from intercourse with foreign countries.'

'They've learnt nothing yet ; and there's little good they could learn.'

'So they think themselves. They've not been far enough, nor staid long enough, nor in sufficient quantities. Send them to France, with their stiff stand-up

collars, and tall hats, their unsociable manners, and pride of purse, closely-shaven chins, and tightly-strapped trousers——’

‘To return with manners as loose as their neckcloths, slouched hats, pockets down to their knees, and an affectation of gaiety which is worse than our ill-humoured reserve.’

‘It will be better for both, Margaret. Travelling will do them good.’

‘It will be worse for us, papa. What pet virtue is France to carry away from England?’ Jansen stopped, and then said slowly, and bitterly,

‘A taste for horse-racing, and that indomitable coolness in wickedness—no, no, let’s shuffle the national vices. You’ll see that, by the time this world is a great network of railways, the Englishman and the Frenchman will be both more agreeable companions, and——’

‘Worse men.’ Bernhard Jansen had risen before his daughter uttered these few words, and it was plain to see that his humour had changed. He ran his hand through his gray locks, which were long and silky. Then he clenched it sternly, turning away from his daughter who had taken possession of the other hand, and said with suppressed voice and emotion, ‘Worse—impossible. S——,’ here he swore a terrible German oath; ‘that you too, Gretchen, should live to say it.’ She let fall his hand and returned to her seat, cowed and dejected. The old man went out.

Margaret Jansen is, notwithstanding increased age, worth a few moments’ consideration. She is as beautiful as when we first saw her, as the assistant glove-cutter in the Woodstock man-trap, so skilfully baited. There were the clear blue eyes, full, rather far apart, the white low forehead, the hair a light brown, perfect in quantity and quality, the lily reigned in her cheek, the rose was dead or had left only its scent, and the bright lips parted showed the pearly teeth, as of old. Of course she looked older—matronly—and the curls which formerly clustered round her temples, and descended to her neck, were now reduced, curbed from their luxuriance into simple bands. She was a very pretty woman.

Before I go on with the story, I must account for

Bernhard Jansen's peculiarity of humour by recurring to the events of past years. It will be remembered that he has been described as a violent, overbearing person, at times, but with a great amount of rough good-humour, and an easy willingness to act with generosity. Circumstances acted upon this temperament at first very disadvantageously. His wife was unsuited to him in many respects, and had that narrowness of understanding which such men are of necessity apt to despise.

One of his characteristics, too, was a love for his daughter, which was warmer as it was less demonstrative than is usual. It was thwarted by the conduct and injudicious manœuvres of Frau Jansen and of the daughter herself. With an honesty of purpose which the giant carried with him in his face and very *physique*, he had denounced their wicked and silly designs for achieving a position of very doubtful happiness and possible disgrace.

From the day that they had reached their present abode in the neighbourhood of Cleves, the man's mind to some degree had given way. All its consistency had broken down when he heard the secret of his daughter's dishonour. It had become necessary that he should know the truth, that the honour of his name and family had been stained in the person of his only child; for within five or six months of their leaving England, Margaret was a mother.

At first, violent paroxysms of rage were succeeded by long fits of silent sullenness; when the dishonour was inevitable, by a settled gloom. It was necessary that the best should be done for the girl, and his violence would but endanger her life, and increase the chance of detection. He was silent that others might be so too. For a twelvemonth he would see neither the one nor the other; for he believed his wife to be the more culpable of the two. Perhaps she was, but her daughter would not tell her so. She joined them on the continent in time to render every needful assistance, having remained in England to pack up their effects.

In a few years the mother died, of cold, or of heat, or of some of those inexplicable disorders of which men and women do die. From that time the old man grew calmer, but he grew older; and as he grew older he became ex-

ceedingly fitful in humour. The odd part of it was that he loved the boy with a fondness which he had once felt for his daughter. He wanted him to study art in Germany, his mother desired that he should go to England. Either would have given way, and from different motives.

A word for the boy himself. He was a very handsome young fellow, with laughing blue eyes, and curly hair, essentially Saxon in appearance, and very English in manner and figure. This Anglicanism had been confirmed and improved by constant association with English boys at his tutor's at Düsseldorf, where, with Latin and Greek, and other needful scholastic accomplishments, he had acquired a facility of speaking our language, which defied detection on the score of his supposed foreign origin. Till he was seven or eight years old he may be said to have rejoiced in no name at all. He was first called Baby, and then George, and it was not until after Mrs. Jansen's death, and when it became necessary to part with him, that a name had to be sought for him. His mother had her way, and he became a fellow-pupil of several young English lads, as George Fellowes. Old Jansen submitted easily to what he could not quite comprehend. He ventured upon some suggestions, which were not heeded by Margaret, and in the end consoled himself with the reflection that, as long as it were not his own name, it would be well to let her have her fancy. 'She has suffered more than I, though she has deserved it.' He was also well content to love the boy, as much as he now professed to hate all Englishmen. 'Fellowes? why not, as well as another. Heaven knows whether the poor girl believes her own story or not.'





CHAPTER XXV

LORD HAWKESTONE'S ROAD HOME.

THE Hotel Maivalt was in those days, and may be now, for anything I know to the contrary, one of the most cheerful, cleanly, and well-managed establishments in that part of the country. By-the-way, I call it the Hotel Maivalt improperly; that was the name of its proprietor, and its proprietor's son, who possibly now enjoys his father's shoes and custom. It has a name, the Prinzenhof, or Hotel Prince Maurice de Nassau. It was then situated in a pretty, hilly, well-wooded country, which cannot have run away, and was in its season—for Cleves has its season—the resort of most wealthy and, being wealthy, respectable burghers of the cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Leipsic. I don't think it touches them by train even now; one must post from Emmerich, or thereabouts. Dutchmen have small practice in dealing with hills, and the Clevischeberg is really quite a mountain—that is, for those parts.

Being an uninteresting place, as times go, that is, when one goes to the sources of the Nile in the Eastern vacation, and cannot qualify for the most unexacting of travellers' clubs without having smoked in Tobolsk, bathed in the Bosphorus, or shot buffalos on a prairie, the reader will perhaps wonder first how I came to recollect such a place, and secondly why I have ever mentioned it.

Well, I recollect it so well, because I was once there,

waiting for remittances; and an undergraduate's remittances (I was then an undergraduate) are or used to be a long time on the road; so that I had plenty of leisure to know all about it, and indeed to become attached to the place, and to a very stout young woman, who came from Dutch-land and dined at the *table d'hôte* daily, sitting next to me. Her father afterwards showed me much attention and his pictures in Rotterdam. My heart was then young and tender, and my appetite strong and lusty as an eagle's. Alas! since then my heart has become hard and callous, and my craving for the affections of stout young Dutch women is as *nil*. I used to go out and take tea or wine and smoke cigars near the grave of Prinz Maurice, and have watched many twinkling feet of a summer's evening at the Thiergarten, while my remittances were on the road. That's how I come to recollect all this so well. But at last the remittances came to hand, and I have not called upon those stores of my memory until now.

And now, as a matter of business, I must tell you why I have mentioned it now. Lord Hawkestone chose to go there as his road to the cities of Holland—and there he was. He stood at the back of the Hotel Prince Maurice leaning over the long wooden balcony, which was bare as yet (for the creepers were not out), looking far away over the Rhine towards Rotterdam. Herr Maivalt stood by him; and, as a judicious landlord, refrained from breaking in upon his reverie. One advantage humility of birth has in the ignorance of our foreign neighbours! to an Englishman with a full pocket every land is a land of equality, if not of paternity. We are all 'milords,' and Herr Maivalt had no idea that his present guest was one atom more exalted in degree than myself.

I have often tried to explain this in such languages as I am master of, and I find that it is the thing for all authors to know all languages, and some even to descend into the dialects, *patois* or whatever they may be called. Do they learn them after they begin writing, or is it a preparatory canter to the race they have to run?

Notwithstanding this the Germans, especially those of

the middle class, do remain curiously ignorant of the word 'gentleman,' and its application. They cannot comprehend an equality as gentlemen, and an inequality as regards mere rank. Having none of it themselves, it is as unintelligible to them as the principles of Buddhism or the position of Mr. Beales. Logicians might be tempted to conceive of it as, Genus, gentleman; and Difference, high birth, forming a species, nobleman; but for the indefinite sense of the word 'gentleman,' leaving us as badly off as ever. For there are gentlemen of very high birth who are not noblemen, and noblemen who are not gentlemen nor of high birth. So we hand it over to Lord Dundreary as one of those things which no man could understand.

'This is a fine country, for Holland, Monsieur,' said my lord, who was, with his fine delicate features and tall well-proportioned figure, a very admirable specimen of the English gentleman, by the side of the intelligent little business-like working man whom he was addressing.

'It is, Monsieur,' replied Herr Maivalt in very good French, but with a very bad accent. 'It is; we think this and Arnheim quite the prettiest part of Holland, though, for the matter of that, we are in Prussia.'

'And what is that high tower that I see there?' inquired Lord Hawkestone, looking towards the part of the town and country visible from the Hotel.

'That is the Castle of Schwanenburg: one of your English queens lived there till she married your Henry the Eighth, the great Reformer.'

'Indeed,' said he, though what his ideas of Henry the Eighth's religious sentiments may have been depended entirely on the school of History in which his lordship had been instructed. Froude had not enlightened the world on those subjects as yet. 'And by what road can I get most readily to Utrecht and Rotterdam, so as to see the best of the Dutch cities on my way to England?'

'And when does Monsieur resume his journey?' Herr Maivalt was alive to the pain of losing so good a guest in the dull season.

'Probably this afternoon.'

‘Then Monsieur will require his carriage?’

‘Ay; and the springs? but my servant has seen to that.’

‘The roads are good. Sandy about here. Monsieur will leave this by Cranenburg for Nimeguen, where Monsieur can sleep. Then to-morrow you can cross the Rhine for Arnheim. Then along the right bank to Utrecht; thence to Amsterdam, and by the Hague to Rotterdam. Ah, the Hague is a charming place. Let me recommend to Monsieur the Hotel du Vieux.’ Saying which he politely gave Lord Hawkestone one of his own cards and one of the hotel in question; and Lord Hawkestone ordered his bill and his carriage to be ready at two o’clock.

One other favour Herr Maivalt asked of Lord Hawkestone; he felt it was a great liberty, but it would be a great assistance, as milord had taken the only horses which they had unengaged at the Poste for that day. ‘Would he be so kind as to give a seat in the rumble (*coupé* he called it) by the side of his valet to a young gentleman, a boy, a *Knabe*, on his way home from Düsseldorf; *ein junger Engländer*,’ added he, as he saw some hesitation on Lord Hawkestone’s countenance.

‘An English boy? Certainly. And have you English people living here?’

‘We have had last year an English mister and his wife, and a young man, a great chasseur, who shot snipe and quail here. There is, too, a Scotchman, not an Englishman, who has been living at the Thiergarten.’

‘And this boy—he is a gentleman’s son?’

‘Gentleman—he is charming—but not noble as far as I know:’ and beyond that Herr Maivalt knew nothing. ‘He lives near Cranenburg; his grandfather dined here yesterday.’

‘What the fine old man, of enormous size, with the white beard, who talked of pictures and racing?’

‘Yes; Herr Jansen. He’s Dutch, but the boy is English.’ And at two o’clock Lord Hawkestone was carrying George Fellowes to his grandfather’s house on the main road beyond Cranenburg.

Lord Hawkestone found his companion intelligent beyond his years ; in everything but about himself and his family. He lived as he said in a cottage with his grandfather and mother. He seemed to have known but few persons beside them and his school-fellows. He was very open, confiding, as far as he could be, and independent in thought and expression ; but he had small experience of the world, and of home nothing to tell.

Lord Hawkestone was a different man from what he had been. To a very casual observer his delicacy of constitution would have shown itself. To those who had known him formerly the change would have been most apparent. His features, always well-defined, had attained a tenuity which was remarkable, and his cheeks had lost all roundness and freshness of colour. What there was was bright and red, and only came with some sudden excitement of pain or pleasure. He had travelled from Italy too rapidly, and felt the cold much. Even now he had set himself a task to do he had better have been without. He was only fit to be nursed instead of visiting Dutch cities.

He had started from Cleves as he imagined well. He had not been half-an-hour on the road before he felt cold and ill, and that recurrence of fainting, which he had felt some years ago. But he had no idea of being stopped by such symptoms. His end was England, and having embarked on the Dutch *détour* he had made up his mind to go through with it.

But it brought him into contact with some of our *dræmatis personæ* in a sufficiently simple way, and I must relate the facts which further the action of our tale.

'Ah, there's mamma,' said the boy. 'Lord Hawkestone, may I tell them to stop? we're very near home.' As he spoke he looked up, and saw that his companion was ill. The lad stopped the carriage, and the valet released him. His mother, too, had stopped when she heard the boy's shout.

Lord Hawkestone was scarcely able to rise, but he did so, putting forth all his strength ; and received the thanks of Margaret, who had brought them with her to the carriage door.

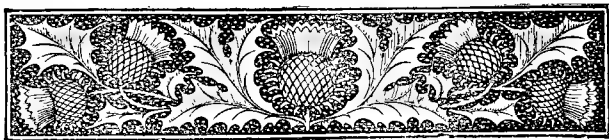
Lord Hawkestone's illness did not prevent him from

recognising Margaret's beauty ; and as his valet was loud in his protestations of the impossibility of proceeding without some hot brandy and water as a restorative, he was compelled to accept the hospitality of the cottage, which the boy's mother was equally compelled to offer.

'We've plenty of brandy, Ma'am, the very best,' said the valet, 'but we can't do without hot water. Perhaps you would allow us to get some from your house.'

Bon gré mal gré there was a stoppage ; and Lord Hawkestone found himself in a very dilapidated state in the presence of his fine old white-bearded giant of the day before, not a little to Bernhard Jansen's surprise.





CHAPTER XXVI.

LORD HAWKESTONE INCREASES HIS ACQUAINTANCE.

IF Bernhard Jansen was very English in England, he had become equally Dutch again now. When Lord Hawkestone entered the house, he found his host with a large meerschaum pipe in his mouth, and enjoying his bottle of Hocheimer; his daughter having gone out for a stroll, to leave him in undisturbed enjoyment of his pleasures. She had, however, returned with the visitor, and now busied herself about the household affairs. It was not long before the hot water was forthcoming; and the shivering fit having passed away, his lordship began to feel better. He looked from his hostess to her father and back again; but good-looking as she was, his attention finally settled on the old man.

Two-thirds of Lord Hawkestone's regiment would have recognised Jansen. They would have remembered to have heard, if they were still in the Guards, his stupendous 'four to one,' or 'seven to four,' against a favourite; and they would have recalled many a cheerful *mot* of the Anglican-Dutchman, who never lost his temper with his money, whatever might have been his bark upon other occasions. It was, however, a few of the privileged that had borrowed of him; and certainly none upon such terms, as to make the old man remarkable among the Shylocks of Europe. Such extensive operations as Harold Falcon's with Herr Jansen had been rare.

But Lord Hawkestone had not been a betting man,

and certainly not a borrowing one. He had in his day been at race-courses often enough; but they were such that even the charms of Bernhard Jansen's voice and offers, to say nothing of his physique, had escaped his notice. Lord Hawkestone put his pony on with a friend, or got Harold to do it for him, on the Derby or the Goodwood cup; hence the certain pleasures of personal acquaintance with the ring had not been added to the uncertainties of having to pay or to receive. Any gentlemen, takers of the odds, backers of horses, will tell you which is the more frequent operation, notwithstanding the fluctuations of Hermit's year. Jansen was equally ignorant of his guest; and, excepting from his grandson's introduction, would have had no knowledge of his name or title.

Lord Hawkestone apologised for the liberty of having a shivering fit on the public road, and so near to a stranger's residence, to his inconvenience.

'The inconvenience must be greater to you, my lord.' And the expression came out as glibly as if Jansen had never left England, but was talking to some of his old patrons at the 'Corner.' With a man who spoke such highly conventional English as this in Prussia or Holland (the latter for choice), whichever it might be, it was not difficult to enter into conversation, as his lordship continued to thaw under the influence of the hot brandy and water. It is but fair to say that Jansen was not as pleased as he pretended to be, and would have well dispensed with this chance visit. Being there the new comer could not be turned out; being ill he must be allowed some time to recruit before proceeding; and having a very handsome, kind, and noble physiognomy, the old carver might have had something less pleasant to look at. Besides, with all his independence, Jansen liked a gentleman; and he had been long enough among us to know one by sight.

Now, where had old Jansen seen that face before? Not that face—nothing so fair or delicate, so fine, so attenuated; but that expression, that trick, with dark hair and eyes, and a brown healthful complexion, so like, and yet not the same.

'And then Lord Hawkestone, after some more conver-

sation on his journey, his designs, and his regrets, turned to Margaret. He thought he had seen few faces so beautiful, so prepossessing, and withal so careworn. A widow, he thought, she must be; and made no allusion that could pain her. We inflict wounds very often when we have no intention of doing so, and fire off words which take effect like stray shots in a neighbourhood full of windows. It's astonishing how many metaphorical windows we break, or rather how many panes we crack.

'And my young friend here is called Fellowes,' said Lord Hawkestone, 'one of the Norfolk Fellowes, I presume.' Lord Hawkestone felt that he had no right to presume that every man of a good name was of a good family; and he blushed lest he should have hurt the feelings of the lady, who answered 'No.'

His blushes were not much to hers; and it is to be hoped they are not essentially a mark of pain.

'No!' repeated Jansen, but he said no more, and Hawkestone sought no further information on that score. So he asked, not to break the subject too abruptly, for what he was being educated. 'I have had all the information about the English chaplain at Düsseldorf, and the young gentleman's own wishes, but might I ask yours?'

'We have endeavoured to give him a good general education to fit him for any walk of life. He is overyoung to choose yet.' And now the theme had ceased to be distasteful.

'I know what I should like to be,' said the boy, seating himself near Lord Hawkestone, his ride with whom had made him even less reticent than usual.

'Then speak out, boy, and tell me,' for Lord Hawkestone was attracted by his beauty.

'I should like to be a painter,' replied the boy at once.

'That's his grandfather's wish, my lord,' said his mother, 'not mine.'

'If you differ, it will be hard for him to please both. He's in a fine country for the study of art now;' to which Margaret replied,

'That's why I dislike it for one reason. I wish him to live in England.'

'But I not,' said the old man, using unconsciously his

country's idiom. 'That is why I prefer him to stop here.'

'Has he studied for that?' inquired Hawkestone.

'Not especially,' said the cloud-compelling Dutchman. 'But if the mother will be persuaded we shall send him to Munich.'

'Why not to England?' said his lordship. 'You scarcely know, as you have been so long away, you tell me, the advance that high art has made of late years in our country. I don't so much mean art itself, for that must take a longer time, so much as the feeling for it among all classes.'

'Do you know the reason of that, my lord?'

'There are many. The earliest, strange to say, was the religious movement; and even now whether that was cause or effect I can't tell. The contemplation of the good and great in one may have exalted the taste and feeling in all. The earliest and best pictures of the high school have all the stamp of religion or purity at least; and symbolically if not actually of a better state. Holman Hunt and Millais, whom you do not know yet, are great examples of this theory, if it be a right one.'

'I think we do know something in this country already of the men you mention. Not in our public galleries, of course; but among our private collectors such names are not overlooked. You have the Manchester school however to outbid us.'

'The Manchester men seem to me to have done their share towards the encouragement of art. They are rich, and great buyers. If not always discriminating at least generous patrons.'

'Generous, my lord—yes; if the encouragement of art as a speculation can be called so. Generous enough in putting money into their own pockets.'

'I think you wrong them.'

'Then it is because they've turned their attention to your railroads instead of art; and in a few years there'll be a thriving trade in them, as there has been in pictures. They only ask one question when they buy, which is 'Will it sell?'

'You seem to be familiar with our market, Mr. Jansen.'

'I lived in it for years, my lord. I was a tradesman in

it, and had many opportunities of judging. There were exceptions—but the reasons for buying, though varied, were not, as you believe, a love of art. They saw you with a fine gallery, and as they had money, they wanted one made to order too. They couldn't buy old masters; they couldn't be manufactured fast enough, so they bought moderns. And when they found a mine in some unknown names, they bought them up by means of a dealer, till the thing was blown, and they began to sell again at double the price. There was a great glut of old masters at one time, manufactured for the occasion, but the competition ruined itself. I've been in an iron-master's house in the Midland Counties where, with one trifling exception, every frame was worth more than the picture it contained. I don't think he knew it, and I'm sure his neighbours didn't; but the trade, bless your soul, they know where to place their good pictures too well to send them to the *parvenus*.'

If Lord Hawkestone had been astonished at the old gentleman's knowledge of England, he was much more so at his boldness in displaying it. His energy of speech was marvellous as he rose and walked up and down, stopping now and then as he argued the matter, and puffing out between whiles volumes of smoke. 'We've very little money here, it's true, to give a spurious support to art, but we've none of that iron and cotton patronage to spoil what we have. I'm a Dutchman, my lord, not a German, and you may laugh at me, because it is our great merchants who have all the treasures, excepting those that lie scattered about in palaces and public buildings; but then a Dutch aristocracy is its tradesmen, and neither we nor our neighbours have any vulgar affectation of what we cannot feel, and were never educated to understand. We found that school a good receptacle for newly-made ancestors. They'd buy anything with taper fingers and a ruff and sword—and though they paid more for a Vandyke, as being more aristocratic and harder to make, they were liberal enough for a Sir Peter Lely or a Sir Godfrey Kneller. I once knew a modern cardinal by Rubens sold for a large sum of money. He took his place as the ancestor of a man whose father swept out the shop in which he had made his money. You English

are a very odd people in some things, and that's one of them. It is your irrepressible energy, I suppose, which enables you to deceive yourselves, while we are satisfied with deceiving others. I dare say Englishmen think Charles the First was a much better man than William of Orange.' At which Lord Hawkestone only smiled.

'But you must admit that increased wealth——'

'Gives all the desire, but none of the taste.'

'Wealth, Mr. Jansen, with us is civilisation; and with civilisation comes knowledge, and with knowledge, taste,' said Lord Hawkestone.

'But that peculiar taste requires a knowledge which you never give—the opportunity of seeing everything without paying for it. Poor men, and consequently the masses, have not the opportunities we give them. You will be a long time educating the masses as we have done.'

Lord Hawkestone felt that it was so, and said as much. 'But wealthy cotton-spinners and iron-masters do not come under the category of the masses, and it was they whom I was defending from your censures. I don't know whether what I'm going to say proves much, but it proves something to the point. A Manchester audience is the most discerning of musical critics; and I once heard that, next to the *élite* of London society, its decisions were most highly prized by our *artistes*.'

'It does say something for your argument; but even then you have not convinced me that I was wrong in the outset. Your picture-buying, excepting among your nobility and some few great men, is a matter of speculation. You have few patrons of art among your wealthy tradesmen.'

As Lord Hawkestone was about endeavouring to refute this dogma, the door opened, and the boy and his mother returned to the room. 'Here comes the innocent cause of our controversy. I have never got as far as my original proposition.' And here the Englishman looked first at the mother and then at the boy. 'I have never yet had the opportunity of saying that, if you will trust him to my charge, whenever you send him over, I will do all I can to help him in his object, whatever it may be.' And then Lord Hawkestone rose to take his leave. He did so,

thanking his host for the shelter he had afforded him, and assuring them both of his capability to proceed with perfect safety. He put on some warmer clothing, however, before starting; and then repeating his hope that they would not forget his invitation to Hawkestone, and exchanging cards and addresses with the old giant, he put himself once more into his carriage, and went on his road. The old man accompanied him to his carriage, and as he took his leave he said,

‘No one could feel more grateful for your kindness to my grandson than I do. He is scarcely old enough to profit by your lordship’s offer, nor does his mother fully comprehend the extent of its advantages. Should he ever come to England, I will venture to take you at your word, as I am sure I may do. But it may be as well to say that I trust your countenance will be directed only to a means of honest independence. George will not be able to lead a life of idleness; nor, if he could, should I desire him to do so.’ Lord Hawkestone put out his hand to old Bernhard Jansen, nodded affirmatively to him, and in another minute was on his road to Nimeguen.

His reflections as he rolled along a not very good road, that is, not good for the springs of one’s own carriage, were amusing enough, but puzzling, very puzzling. Now how could a man who had lived in England manifestly a great many years, notwithstanding some marked accent, have left it to live in a sequestered spot on the borders of Holland and Prussia? And his life seemed to have been a strange one altogether. He’d have thought it very much more extraordinary if he had known it all. Old Jansen had acknowledged the high art; the old carving, the picture-dealing, the fancy portraits, old china, and other curiosities, in which he had traded; but he had said nothing about the ring at Newmarket, where he had been known; nor the money-lending business, in which his Cousin Harold had so fatally participated.

Herr Jansen was not morally reticent of these things. He felt no real shame that they should have formed an episode in his history: that they should have helped to make a few hundreds for his wife and daughter. He only felt that they were wrong because they had been unsuccessful: and that’s the reason he was silent about them.

I don't know even that he would have been sorry that the boy should have known them, but for their utter failure. He had so much the elements of success in his physical being, so much strength, size, energy, vitality, that he was ashamed of having been beaten at anything.

When Bernhard Jansen had taken to the turf as a profession, he had been led to believe that it was a certain fortune; and he had been very ambitious to accomplish that end. Now, in the way of professional betting, the turf was nothing of the sort. It was a moderate but certain income, with the chance of a great *coup*, rarely—just now and then—achieved under circumstances of more luck than honesty. In Jansen's case they never came off; and it was not in itself allied to his capacity or taste. Men liked his size, his ways, his honest dealings; but, like heavy bodies, he was slow, and lighter and more pressing vehicles cut in before him. For a money-lender he was too merciful. He wanted more of the Shylock to succeed in that. He made bad debts through his generosity, and was not high enough in his rate of interest to make a living. He never exceeded thirty per cent., and often had to borrow the money himself at fifteen. It was his fate to have some ready money in those days, and to have run up against Harold Falcon in his necessities. Now his necessities were so very great that he must have ruined any Jew—why not Jansen? Then came the mysterious whispers, and suspicions about his daughter. To be sure he had allowed his wife to send her out to work at Woodstock; and he knew best the woman's motive—so strong an one—marriage with a gentleman, forsooth! And when he came to that, the old man hung his head, and a tear ran down to his beard. Prettily it had ended. When his boy had to go to England, if that should be his ultimate destination, he would himself accompany him. Lord Hawkestone looked like a gentleman, and doubtless was what he represented himself to be; but he had not entertained Englishmen under his roof before, nor would he do so again if he knew how to prevent it. He had forgotten that men entertain angels sometimes unawares.

But here he was, and here was Margaret; he with his sorrows, she with her regrets: and he had saved some

few thousands, which should go to Margaret's boy, together with her own. They were rich almost in his own country, and selected their acquaintances where they liked. Why should Margaret so much wish the lad to find employment in England? Let him forget a country which had so many unhappy reminiscences for them. Nevertheless, as he turned Lord Hawkestone's card round in his hand, he thought it might be a fine opening for his grandson. The man had evidently taken a liking to the lad. He put down his daughter's beauty very much under its true appreciation, possibly even in the present case; the power of beauty is so very subtle.





CHAPTER XXVII.

EGMONT.

AT this time of railroads and other safe investments for honestly-made money, a suburban retreat, not to use an Hibernicism, is a luxury only to be enjoyed about five and twenty miles out of town. Men who are not of robust constitutions, especially as regards the brain, are willing to satisfy themselves with something short of twenty, say fifteen; but their purses must be strong, if their brains are weak, for such luxuries. Those with more marrow and fewer debentures, seek their pastures further afield. A few suffer, it is true. A most respectable man of middle age, who has worked hard all his life, pushed further and further out of London, finds himself rapidly approaching the midland counties, and reaches his office in the Strand, or a little east of Temple Bar, with a confused notion of everybody's business but his own. For it must be confessed that a suburban railway is as very a gossiping-shop as any old woman's boudoir in Bath or Cheltenham. Even that confusion of ideas is not allowed to last long. In no time he finds himself shelved—a valetudinarian who has nothing in the world the matter with him, but an inability to stand a daily shaking and jolting, rattling and screeching, three hours out of his twelve.

‘Head all wrong?’ says his friend and neighbour, Blister. ‘Thought so—not surprised at it. Ah! feels as if the top of your skull was coming off; yes, yes, and

nothing worth the trouble when you look inside. Ah! you must give up work—don't let him go to town any more, at present—quiet, perfect quiet is what he wants.'

'Well, Blister, what's the matter with poor Dogberry?' says Mrs. Blister.

'Not much, my dear—head won't stand his work, that's all—wants rest.'

'Work! Why he's nothing to do. He always goes up at nine and comes down by the four o'clock train.'

'Yes, that is the work. It's a splendid thing for us. There have been more cases of softening of the brains the last ten years than in ten centuries before the railroads. It's the poor men that can't live near town that it sends to us.'

Now Egmont was not precisely one of these places; for it is but a short distance from London: and to judge by those of its inhabitants that we know, they have not yet suffered from the railway. The soft-brained ones were already there when old Lady Falcon left Harold her villa and his twenty thousand pounds.

At that time there was no railway: and the society of Egmont was courtly and aristocratic. The place was small, pretty, countryfied, and consisted entirely of villas and what auctioneers call Detached Family Mansions, built of red brick, with stone copings: they had a look of Horace Walpole about them; and those that were not heir-looms from the old nobility of George the First or Anne, and occupied by the owners themselves, were the retreats or resting-places of men and women who had been famous in their day: *littérateurs*, actors and actresses, curiosity collectors, and an artist of high class. There was scarcely a shop to be met with in the place; and the people were as independent of one another as if they lived in Grosvenor Square.

But it so happened that Egmont was one of the first places affected by the new mania; and being not far from one of the leading roads out of the metropolis was peculiarly obnoxious to the scandal speculation that set in as soon as Mr. Huskisson had been killed. It seemed to be no sooner ascertained that a great national calamity might be made to coincide with great enterprise, than they set to work with a will. It was not bad for Egmont

itself; that is, for the brick and mortar of which it was composed; and had there been a shop or two, they might have benefited by the rail. Property would have been more valuable had the owners waited; but they were just the persons who could afford not to wait: and as the engines rushed in they rushed out of it, at any price, they could get. The cheerful, highbred-looking place became almost a howling wilderness. The lovers' walks and authors' seats were disfigured by smoke, dirt, cart-grease, navvies, and cranes; and within half-a-dozen years the society of the place was as much changed as if the Vale of Tempe had been put down in the middle of Manchester. Lady Trumpington's had fallen into the hands of a really conscientious lawyer, who went to his office in Parliament Street with the regularity of some watches and clocks. Lord Manhattan's villa had been bought for next to nothing by an American ship-broker of no questionable character, having emerged thrice from bankruptcy, each time with more horses, more plate, more property, and more impudence than ever. The doctor, a capital fellow, was a fixture, being quite as ready to kill commoners as lords. The parson, a pure aristocrat, had walked off, leaving a curate, under the impression that he was quite good enough for the newcomers. A pork-butcher opened the first shop in Egmont, having taken one of five hideous tenements on the main road, knowing that our friend, Mr. F——, the great Salopian man-in-the-moon, had declared that meat to be the true Radical form. Sir Benjamin Scarecrow, the great authority on the game-laws, gave way to Mr. Smithson—of Smithson, Colt, and Harrow, the iron-mongers in Oxford Street; and Mrs. Startenham, the great tragic actress, who has achieved an European reputation, sold her beautiful cottage to an old lodging-house keeper from Pimlico. The squire—but more of the Squire of Egmont by-and-by.

It seems that it was just about this time, or shortly before it, that old Dame Falcon, the great-aunt of Harold, died. She was not Lady Falcon, but had gone by that title among her dependants in Wales and elsewhere. The villa she had once lived in at Egmont became distasteful to her, and she had ceased to live in it.

But she had never sold it, and disposed of it by will; giving it to her Nephew Harold Falcon, because he seemed to be the one of all her legatees who could not possibly stand in need of it. What did he want with a house? Well, to be candid, the old lady had a reason perhaps, morally speaking not a good one—but it was one, and will satisfy those who think a bad one better than none at all.

She left it, with his share of the money, to Harold, because she was sure he would be a thorn in the side of the new inhabitants of her old residence. 'I know he's fond of horse-racing, and gambling, and plenty of fast society, and that he has done all those sorts of odd things that young men of his class will do; so I'm going to leave him the villa, with a condition that he must live in it three months out of the twelve, more or less. I shouldn't wonder if he opened the eyes of his neighbours by taking that Mademoiselle Pirouette down, about whom Hawkestone used to lecture him. I hope he'll frighten 'em all out of the place; for he won't be able to associate with one of them.'

However, he did not take down Mademoiselle Pirouette: and since his aunt's death it would have been difficult to have found a more steady fellow for his age than Harold Falcon; and when obliged to be among them, his neighbours were rather flattered by his attentions than otherwise.

'Well, Helen, when does Lord Falconberg talk of going down to Egmont?'

'Papa talks of Easter; but that will depend upon Hawkestone's return. Have you any idea when that is to be expected?'

'The last time I heard from him he was about leaving Lucerne. He didn't say so, but I fancy he was rather tired with his journey, and meant to rest a day or two. If he gets to the Hague he is sure to rest a few days there, if not at Amsterdam or Rotterdam.'

'What could he see in that place to stay for?' said Lady Helen, whose sympathies were rather with fine scenery than with fine cities.

'The Hague is a place of peculiar interest, unique of its kind. I have often thought Egmont might have been

like it on a very small scale before the railroad came to it.'

'A pin's head to a cannon-ball: a twenty-four pounder or whatever you call them,' said the lady. 'And what can you say to Rotterdam?'

'I can say this, that I never was so near committing involuntary suicide as in that great commercial city. I was shaving at my window, in what has always appeared to me as the only hotel in the place, when the masts of a vessel passed so close to me as to startle me very effectually. I cut myself rather severely, but not in the right place to produce any sensation, excepting an unpleasant one to myself. Upon my word, with all its dirt and disorder, and there's plenty of both, I think it's as amusing as Venice, and cleaner.'

'And what of his health, Harold? Do you think he has been a gainer by his winters abroad?'

'Yes, I do. He is not more prudent than other invalids: but he's better away from England in bad weather. Besides, ill health will never make a coward of Hawkestone. If he were at home, he'd never be happy unless he were hunting or shooting; and any severe cold might be fatal.'

'I should so like to nurse him, Harold. I'm sure good nursing is as good as a fine climate. I can't bear to think of him alone, even in Italy.'

'Should you be happier if I went? I will do so with pleasure, next season.'

'No, that would never do. You must stay for my father.'

'Your father's health is good, and likely to continue so, let us hope.'

'Yes, but not his spirits. Something weighs upon him.'

'Oh, he's disappointed because Hawkestone doesn't marry Lady Di.'

'And why shouldn't he marry Lady Di?'

'Because he won't marry anybody. He has peculiar notions on the subject of matrimony.'

'But he must know that she likes him. I know it at all events: and I should hardly think a more suitable match could be found in England. Surely he

has no objection to such a marriage as that,' for Helen was fond of her friend; and to have made a friend of Lady Helen Falcon was to have a champion in any cause.

'His objections are not to Lady Di.'

'To what then? My father wishes it, so does the duchess, so do I.'

'His objections are to himself—his health. I wish he would marry, but he will not.'

'Do what you can. You have great influence with him. Then we need not trouble ourselves about nursing him; and they could live where they pleased.'

'I have urged him. I would give all I have to see Hawkestone with a wife at the Castle, and once more as he was years ago.'

'Does he think so badly of himself?' and as this suggestion rose to Lady Helen's mind she looked more anxiously at her cousin than usual.'

'He does think badly of himself. He saw Lobel the last time he was in England. He doesn't like him, but he has the highest opinion of his talents.'

'And what did Lobel say?'

'That he might be kept alive with care. You know what that means, Helen?' Lady Helen's eyes were full of tears. 'Let us look it boldly in the face.'

Lady Helen could look nothing boldly in the face at that moment. Not that the suspicion of the truth had come upon her suddenly, but she had never had to face it before. 'And what does it mean, in its fullest extent?' said she.

'Less than it says. I would not give you pain, Helen, but it means a question of time. Hawkestone knows that. But he is less unhappy than any of us. He has no fears; and if it be true that anxiety darkens or shortens the last years or days of the doomed, he will be in no way affected by such feelings. His whole anxiety is for you and my uncle.' The tears were really now falling gently from Helen's eyes: and as Harold looked at her a pang came over him which nearly mastered his resolution. 'Ah,' thought he, 'what would I now give to be able to wipe them away. How little we know the mischief that may be wrought by our want of considera-

tion. There was a great truth involved in Harold Falcon's mind at that moment. Who would be so ready to repress belief in eternal retribution for temporal wickedness, if he regarded the results of his actions instead of their more immediate consequences? God only knows the consequences of our simplest actions.

And then Lord Hawkestone came home ; and in the first flush of his return it was not easy to see that much change had taken place. He was far from what men are accustomed to call an invalid. He was to be seen in society, at the clubs, at dinners, at Lord Falconberg's box with Lady Helen, not often at balls, it must be admitted, and he had his horses in town. Men did not yet ride in the Row at one o'clock ; but they often took a refresher after breakfast or before it along the turf or round the Serpentine, and he and Harold were often to be seen among them. They neither of them did much in the world, so that they were just now uninteresting characters for a novel-writer. Yet all this time a few persons thought Lord Hawkestone looking thinner and paler. But no man that saw him in society dreamt of the real and painful truth to which he had long reconciled himself.

'Where are you going to dine to-day, Harold?' said he as he rode down the Row with him towards Apsley House.

'I was going to dine at the Club ; for I know your father and Lady Helen are going to dine at the Duke of Poitiers'. Why are you not going?'

'I don't care to go out now ; it's so hot. Let's ride down to Richmond and dine there. We can get some white-bait, and some of Ball's twenty claret, and ride back in the cool of the evening.'

So they turned out of the Park, and crossing Piccadilly, rode down Grosvenor-place and away into the fresh air, out of the dust, which was flying, and from the crowd that was greeting them on all sides as they passed along.

They found the Castle Gardens full to overflowing. There was no dust on the river, but the noise was far beyond that of the streets. The Literary Dustmen's dinner was to take place ; and Literary Dustmen, both

before and after that event, are as the workmen of Babel.

The Glacier Club was out on the same excursion too, and the development of muscular Christianity was great. Every room was engaged or nearly so : but as our Radical friends would say, a bloated aristocrat can do anything ; so they gave Hawkestone and Harold a room in which it seemed difficult to sit down, and in which it would have been impossible to carve a goose. As Hawkestone observed, when Harold made the remark, it was not necessary for many reasons : first, there would be no goose to carve ; secondly, the Literary Dustmen were already employed upon the dissection of such geese as came before them, with a better chance of success.

‘Here’s a carriage, Harold,’ said his cousin, looking out of the window, ‘and a curiosity getting out of it.’ Harold went to the window, and saw a figure which might naturally have attracted anyone’s attention.

It was a man of great size in bulk, but short of stature. He arrived in a yellow coach, whose panels were so quartered as to appear practising for a Lord Mayor’s day : and from the difficulty he found in getting out of it, must have been growing since he got into it. His face was all red, his clothes all black ; but relieved by a preponderance of old-fashioned scarlet watch-ribbon worn in the old-fashioned way, with a large bunch of seals and keys attached to it. His hat had a fine roll in the brim with a certain width, which was judiciously managed to take off somewhat of attention from the man himself. The glossy nature of the entire man, who looked new from head to foot, now that he was once out of his chariot, was that of the most prosperous bagman upon earth ; a bagman of whom you might have been ashamed at Devonshire House, but whose heir you would like to have been, if a little short of money at the time of his death. He was followed by a beautiful girl of not more than sixteen or seventeen years of age.

Harold and his cousin were amused enough at the phenomenon from the yellow coach, and not less so at the great dissimilarity between father and daughter, for

such was the relationship between them: a relationship that might, as far as appearance went, be represented by Bismark and moderation, or Disraeli and Parliamentary Consistency, Peto and punctuality of payment, or any other transparency of the age. At that moment, however, the waiter presented himself with a silver tureen and a professional flourish which denoted dinner, and the gentlemen sat down to table.

‘Who is the gentleman who arrived just now in a yellow chariot?’

‘Yellow chariot, Sir: yessir—which chariot, Sir?’

‘The yellow chariot with a quantity of heraldic devices,’ said Lord Hawkestone.

‘Heraldic devices, yessir—certainly, Sir.’

‘A coat of paint of divers colours on the panels,’ explained Harold.

‘Coat of paint, yessir. Inquire in the house, Sir,’ and off rushed the waiter for information—and returned but little wiser.

‘Head-waiter, Sir, can’t say, Sir—doesn’t know.’ Saying which he took off the soup and levanted. After which the two gentlemen went on with their dinner and their conversation, regardless or forgetful of the stout man and the yellow coach.

But the fat man in the mean time was getting interested in the two gentlemen. Of course there are more obsequious waiters than one in a house like the Castle at Richmond: not all of exactly the same type, but more or less obsequious. This is especially the case when we travel in handsome yellow chariots and wear undeniable new clothes. An old hat and dusty boots only meets with that spurious sort of civility which is the inseparable accident of the genus waiter of any sort. It is not surprising therefore that our fat friend was soon in company with a gentleman who addressed him with—

‘Yessir, certainly, Sir—white-bait, Sir, stooode heels’ (which we expect to be associated with tripe).

‘D—your heels, Sir; send the landlord.’ And the waiter being duly impressed with the solemnity of this language, did send the landlord.

‘Now, Ball, how are you?’ said the irate old gentle-

man, when he found himself with Mr. Ball before him. 'Ow are ye?'

'Thank you, Mr. Cripplegate, well. I hope you and Mrs. Cripplegate are the same,' bowing at the same time to the old gentleman and his daughter. For Mr. Ball was not obsequious at all to fine clothes or fine carriages. Indeed Mr. Ball was a very well-behaved and well-spoken gentleman, much better than his patron; and utterly indifferent to everything but the realities of life. So he was happy to see such a molten image as Mr. Cripplegate of the Fishmongers' Company in his house. He was an old customer: a good diner, who did justice to his cooks and his *cartes*, and good pay. Hence his energetic language on the subject of 'stooede heels.'

'Now, Ball, a nice little dinner, my friend, for two of us. I'm *on* (which he pronounced *hon*) *route* for my noo place at Hegmont.' It was unlucky that it began with a vowel. 'It's a charming place, Ball, charming—quite a gentleman's place—belonged to hold Squire Cavendish, one of the first families in England.'

'How many miles do you call it from here, Ball?' said he after he had allowed the honest landlord time to digest his information.

'We call it seven,' said Mr. Ball.

'Ah, I see; seven to post, six to drive,' said he of the Fishmongers' Company laughing. 'And who have you here—very full?'

'Very full, Sir; very full to-day—we've a large party in No. six; Mr. Simcox.'

'Oh, I know, Simcox and Cogwell—carriage builders, made that yaller trap as I come down in—they aint much—anybody helse, Ball?'

'There's a great dinner of the Literary Dustmen, Lord Folio in the chair, and Sir Cloudy Brevier, vice. Three guineas a-head.'

'You don't say so!' Literature rose a little for a minute or two in old Cripplegate's estimation, but went down again upon a consideration that it didn't happen every day. 'Ah! hannual, I suppose. They're only littery 'acks. Who's in the private rooms?' Upon which Mr. Ball, who was quite aware of his guest's weak-

ness, began to enumerate the best names he had on his list for that day. 'There's Captain Sloper, of the Guards, and Sir Shane O'Neill——'

'Hirish beggar,' interrupts Cripplegate; 'o'pe he pays. member for some place, aint he? I know the county as 'ud soote him. Sli-go,' adds the old gentleman, after a pause in which the landlord didn't attempt to guess; 'only stops in parliament to keep out o' the Bench.' And although his remarks were not complimentary, they were nearly true.

Then Mr. Ball started again. 'There's an old acquaintance of yours, Mr. Cripplegate, in the next room: Sir George Dashington and Sergeant Wigsby, with three or four more. They're giving a dinner to Judge Stringer.'

'Is the judge here? I must go in after dinner; he'll be quite hurt unless I look in upon him.'

'There's a large party of the Glacier Club in the big room: they've got Professor Alpenstock in the chair. And there's Captain Falcon and Lord Hawkestone dining together—just come down for a ride, and going back again.'

'Captain Falcon! Is that the Captain Falcon who lives at Hegmont, Ball? Lord bless you! I know him; he's a neighbour of mine. I shouldn't like to leave without paying my respects to him. Who's he got with him?'

'Only his cousin, Lord Hawkestone.'

'Only,' thought Mr. Cripplegate again, as he shuddered at Mr. Ball's familiarity.

'Ah, Lord Hawkestone; certainly. I'll get you to take my card in. They'll be near neighbours of mine; and though Captain Falcon's is but a small place, one must be civil, you know, Ball. I'll just tell you what, between ourselves, I'm afraid our friend, Lord Hawkestone, isn't long for this world; and the captain's the heir. Not that I think of that much, but it's one's duty, as the squire of a place like that,'—here Ball opened his eyes, and the old fishmonger drew himself up, —'to make things agreeable to one's neighbours, great and small. "And though he feasted all the great, he ne'er forgot the small." Eh, Ball? That's my motto; and here comes the *sole au gratin* (which he called the soul

o' Grattan), so we'll sit down at once, my dear.' I regret to say that excellent education he had provided for his daughter at London-super-Mare, at three hundred per annum, had taught her to blush for her father's vulgarity: but he was too good and too kind for her to be thoroughly ashamed of him. It was a very painful, but not uncommon, social dilemma.

The fishmonger was not a man at any time to be put down by the conventionalities of life. He had two strong points—self-esteem and a love for the aristocracy. One could scarcely imagine their existence together in the person of Mr. Cripplegate; but there they were. We leave an explanation to more careful philosophers, unless they are satisfied with that of total blindness to our own imperfections.

When Harold Falcon received his card he was entirely at a loss to know why, or by whose company, they were to be honoured.

'Who the devil is Mr. Cripplegate, waiter?'

'Can't say, Sir,' as usual.

'Hawkestone, is he a friend of yours?'

'No; don't you know him?'

'Not I,' said Harold.

'Then show him in,' said the nobleman, laughing, as if he expected to see something remarkable.

And so he did: for he saw his friend of the yellow chariot, who, after claiming a sort of acquaintance with Harold, informed them both of his new purchase, and of his hope that the families would be on the best of terms.

'But, Mr. Cripplegate, Lord Falconberg does not live in Egmont. It is my cousin only, Captain Falcon, whom you see there. He is your neighbour.'

'True, true, my lord; but I know the family is often down there; for I took great care—very great care—to inquire who my neighbours were likely to be, and I heard all about it. You see where there's ladies and some rank—I may say some rank, for it's been hinted to me from the 'ighest quarters that I'm to be knighted, gentlemen—my lord, I mean—when things are so, of course, it becomes the hupper ten to look out. I'm a Tory to the back-bone.'

'Then I'm afraid you'll find my father differ from you,'

said Lord Hawkestone, laughing, ‘for he’s a terrible old Whig, worse than I am, or my Cousin Harold.’ This was rather hard upon the old gentleman, who, having accomplished his object of adding to his importance before Mr. Ball, wished them both good-evening. And this is the way Harold Falcon became acquainted with the new Squire of Egmont.





CHAPTER XXVIII.

A TOTAL DISREGARD OF THE UNITIES.

HAVE the most sacred disregard for the unities, in everything but Aristotle and the Greek dramatists; and these latter cared very little about it. Nothing but a fear on the part of the French dramatists that they should revert to a barbarity and rudeness of construction, can excuse their quasi-adoption of them. The negative virtues of French tragedy, and their somewhat over-careful avoidance of impropriety, is a poor apology for a system unfitted to anything but the purest classic form. Corneille may well apologise for his adoption of it, if he does so by the condemnation of contemporary critics. What can we have to do with the magnificent sculpture of an *Œdipus*, a *Prometheus*, or an *Antigone*; and what influence upon art, as employed about imagination, are *Racine* or *Voltaire* likely to produce?

But I speak here not so much of unity of action, as of time or place. The novelist, who may lie like an historian and create like a poet, must have some regard to the first of these. Any latitude you please I shall claim for time and place, so long as my scenes and their extension shall be made subservient to my end. You may take in the whole of a story at one view: and like a picture, rather than with a group of marble, you may enjoy the accessories of landscape and distance, without detriment to the main object of the design.

There are plenty of causes why the Greek drama

should have admitted of these compressions, in the simplicity of primeval life, as to the subject represented from mythology or the heroic ages ; in the peculiar structure of their theatres ; their absence of scenic change ; and their inability to understand a convenience unconnected with their education. Not that they were themselves rude or uncultivated. Perish the thought ! They were men on the very pinnacles of education and refinement.

But man refuses to recognise their rules in a modern novel ; and Horace himself forgot to mention them in that light sketchy article of his to the Pisos, in which he deals with the requisites to form a poet or dramatist, in as far as he can be made, not born.

In consequence of this hardihood on my part, I derive a great advantage over those who would not object to extend their views to an action of thirty hours' duration. To be sure some speak of fourteen days, during which they may dine and sleep, and get up again, before the eyes of the reader, without inflicting upon him any gross exaggeration of probability. The historian, it is true, is permitted to annihilate space and time, and to detail various actions without respect to even possibility. Alas ! that we should have to say so. I am going to ask for years ; but I hope my act will enable me so to connect the time past with the present and to come, that we shall not be prevented from taking in the whole at one view. If I do this I believe I shall have done enough to have satisfied the most exacting of critics.

Lord Hawkestone, since I first took my reader down to Hawkestone Castle, had apparently progressed but slowly towards the end which his physicians had unquestionably prognosticated. Still he was delicate-looking, and unable certainly to take the same liberties with himself which he had done formerly. It was not the men and women who met him in society who remarked his moments of languor, or understood the change that had taken place in his general habits and appearance. In society no man saw that peculiarly anxious look which stole upon him so often when he sat thoughtfully in an arm-chair after unwonted exercise. His hands were more transparent, and the pure veins coursed one another so

very visibly along his temples that it gave an idea of delicacy, which he admitted to no one but Harold.

To him he made no secret of his very gradual decay. He had understood it this seven or eight years : and he spoke without the slightest reserve on subjects connected with it. He was especially anxious that Harold should marry, and he made no hesitation of mentioning Lady Helen in connection with him, not only to Harold himself, but to other very intimate friends.

This had gone on for years. Harold was constantly with his uncle and cousin during Hawkestone's absence, and now that he was returned, he was with them more frequently than ever. The tastes of the two men were alike in many respects : Lord Hawkestone had never been a gambler, and Harold had scarcely betted twenty pounds for years ; but the former kept a few horses, and Harold took an active part in their training when his cousin was out of the way. I said before that Hawkestone would go out hunting, although he was forbidden to do so : at any rate he was forbidden to ride hard ; and now he refused obstinately to go abroad again this season, unless his health positively drove him away : at all events he intended to shoot the covers at Hawkestone, even if he went to the south again for the cold of February, March, and April.

It may be easily understood that a person of this kind was very difficult to manage. Lady Helen and her father tried their hand without success ; and they both began to believe in his eventual recovery. They went backwards and forwards constantly to Egmont, until it began to be regarded in the light of the family villa, as much as the property of Harold alone.

In the mean time the old women in town could not see two such excellent fish in their way without having a throw for them. One of course was only a trout and the other a salmon ; but they were both worth the trouble, and valuable when taken. As yet the old anglers hadn't hit upon the right fly.

'My dear Mrs. Chatters,'—the wife of the honourable Colonel Chatters, an old cavalry officer, but still a young man,—'why doesn't that Lord Hawkestone marry?'

'I haven't the slightest idea, Lady Pendleton. I'm

sure it's not for the want of encouragement,'—that was rather hard upon a lady with five daughters and only a moderate jointure,—'but I'll ask Lord Belleville for you if you like: I believe Lady Diana's the only person Lord Hawkestone has ever exhibited a *penchant* for.'

'I don't think Lady Di is in fault, my dear,' replied the ill-natured old woman.

'I don't know how that may be,' says Mrs. Chatters again, who was fond of Diana, 'but there's his cousin Harold Falcon: now really he'd be the best speculation for you of the two, if he were not so abominably *épris* of Lady Helen.'

'Mrs. Chatters, my dear,' and Lady Pendleton affected to laugh off the other's rudeness: 'what nonsense you talk—even if he is seen sometimes in the park with Laura; but as to Lady Helen, why, you know Harold Falcon has nothing—has been in debt all his life, and could not live in the country until his aunt died and left all her nephews and nieces twenty thousand pounds a-piece. I should like to see Lady Helen Falcon married upon six hundred a-year.'

'Or dear Laura either, dear Lady Pendleton; but you know Lady Helen has forty thousand of her own, and as Lord Hawkestone's life is scarcely worth three years' purchase——'

'You don't say so!' and Lady Pendleton made up her mind that if Harold were to make an offer to Laura, it might be well to try how far a limited income could be made to go with so large a stake in prospect.

That is the way ladies with marriageable daughters talked about Lord Hawkestone and his cousin. There were plenty there who would have taken either of them, and risked the health of the one and the prospects of the other; and the girls themselves, it is but fair to say, were even more disinterested.

When Hawkestone came from the continent the last time he had mentioned casually to Harold his having met with a pretty woman, half English, half German (he called her), with a handsome boy, in whom he took an interest; that is, as much interest as one generally takes in pretty women, with good-looking sons, whom one only sees once, and whom one is not likely to see again.

Harold had not paid much attention to his cousin's account, and Hawkestone had never repeated it. Strange to say he had not even mentioned Jansen's name, although he had made a memorandum of it, and of the boy George Fellowes. It was not unnatural that, having spoken of them once, he should never recur to them again. He never cared to talk of his foreign experiences; and unlike some persons, he gave everybody credit for knowing everything about it. This is a rare quality in a traveller; for it is just that anxious wish to appear cleverer than other people that produces so many rivals to Baron Munchausen. English gentlemen are not naturally given to this, as their assumed indifference, if no more powerful motive does so, deters them from it; but your travelled monkey of the upper middle—or what are called the respectable—classes of society, is an intolerable bore, who offends all, some by his assumption, some by his rivalry.

During the summer months Lord Falconberg was always in town, though nothing was so irksome to him as the dust and heat. He hailed the villa at Egmont therefore as a perfect Godsend. Nothing could have been more opportune than Harold's offer, and when Lord Hawkestone and Harold were not disposed to leave town, or not in that direction, he and his daughter made a point of spending from Saturday till Monday at the bachelor's retreat. He became quite the lion of the place; and notwithstanding the obtrusive greatness of the new squire, whom we saw at his own introduction to Hawkestone and Harold at Richmond, there was something about a real earl which quite cut old Cripplegate out. Besides, he was not yet Sir Samuel. That honour was in abeyance, until it had been clearly ascertained which way old Cripplegate meant to vote in some city election not yet come off. The fact is, the alderman was shaky.

The earl was really worth looking at, independently of the Lady Helen. She took the curate's breath away the first Sunday she appeared. The rector, you remember, went with the rest of the aristocracy, so there was none. He (the earl, not the rector nor the curate) was a very fine gentlemanly-looking old man, who had aged very rapidly. It was a very grand sight to see him in the

centre of the congregation, in an ordinary pew which belonged to the house, and which had been given as a sort of sop for the ten-pound note which old Lady Falcon, non-resident then as the rector now, had lent, long before the parish could have guessed what a rarity a real bit of blood would be. Handsome and aristocratic-looking as he was, nobody that saw him saying his prayers with true devotion, uncurtained and uncribbed, would believe that he was a positive lord with some thirty thousand a-year. Now 'the squire' (I intend to ask for a definition of a squire before long) had the dignity of a large roomy pew with red curtains round it; with a little chair for each of the children, which he had not; and three fine arm-chairs, with large desks and enormous large-typed golden-bound prayer-books, out of which a man is bound (as well as his book) to pray like a nobleman. But the people would not look at him. Nobody took any notice of him when the earl and Lady Helen came to church. The Sunday-school children, who, I am obliged to confess, are a most discriminating race, cared no more for this vulgar old snob than if he were nobody, while they bobbed and courtesied at Lord Falconberg and Lady Helen without ceasing. They had no great encouragement, for it was not their parish, but they appeared not to be able to help it.

'Helen, dear, give that little thing a shilling for me; ' and Lady Helen waited a moment while the rest of the children went by, questioning the blue-eyed little thing about something or other, and then shaking hands quietly, slipped a shilling into her hands, and walked quickly after her father.

'My dear, here come Flora Styles and the rest of 'em,' says old Cripplegate to his wife, one Sunday afternoon, at the bottom of the churchyard.

'Now, Flora, what was the text of our excellent pastor's discourse?'—this in a loud voice. Flora becomes bright scarlet, hangs down her head and cries.

'Now you, who are you? little girl, let's hear the text.'

'Please, Sir, I'm Mrs. Southcote's daughter.'

'Well, then, Mrs. Southcote's daughter,'—and here he and his wife and daughter, and all the other wives and

daughters laughed loudly,—‘what was the text of our excellent clergyman this afternoon?’

‘Please, Sir,’ replied she, ‘Thou almost persuadest me to be a Christian.’

‘That’s a good girl. Mrs. Cripplegate, my dear, give Mrs. Southcote’s daughter a shilling.’

‘Please, Sir, I know’d ‘un too,’ says Sally Lowndes. But Cripplegate was deaf to such a charmer; and pursued his way to his lodge-gate, having done the bountiful to a full audience. Not that he was a stingy man or grudged the shilling, but Cripplegate wasn’t a gentleman. These squires nowadays seldom are.

Lord Falconberg had made up his mind that Lord Hawkestone was better; and when he saw him enjoying his usual amusements, it is not surprising that he was affected by the appearances which deceived other people. Then, as was natural, he reverted again to the prospects of his son’s marriage; and all its conveniences, if not its probabilities, struck him very forcibly. Lord Falconberg was by nature a shy man. Education and constant intercourse with the highest class of the aristocracy had negatived the disposition by the habit of saying what he thought, and, it must be admitted, of doing what he liked. He was thoroughly spoilt by his family. Yet he was conscious of some sort of superiority on the part of Lord Hawkestone, which prevented him from saying to him, what he thought he might say of him; nor could he see any impediment to Harold’s urging that which he might so much better have done for himself. He did not understand that it ought to have been easier to him to have said, ‘My boy, I think it’s high time that you married somebody,’ than to anybody else. Of course in his dilemma he went to Harold.

‘Harold, are you going to Newmarket next week with Hawkestone?’

‘I thought of doing so, unless you want me in town.’

‘Doesn’t it occur to you that his health is much better than it used to be? In fact, the danger we dreaded for so many years is pretty well over.’

‘I think he is much better. Whether all danger can be said to be over, so long as he carries about with him the seeds of such a disorder, I doubt. You know he is

the least nervous man in the world about himself ; but he still thinks it right to take every precaution.'

'You were always a croaker, Harold.'

'Not about myself, uncle. I confess I have been so about Hawkestone, but am much less so.'

'Does it never occur to you that he is rather—well, I won't say in love, but attentive to Lady Di——'

'I think he likes her——'

'Yes, so I thought.'

'About as well as I do, or you do. It's Hawkestone's nature to be kind to women, and nobody could help it to Lady Di. No, uncle, I don't think there's much in that. I wish he'd marry her, or somebody like her,' added he, rather fiercely ; for he could not help recollecting his own position with regard to the title and estate, and thought the old lord was paying him a very disagreeable compliment in making him the marplot to his own fortunes. However, he was glad to believe that they saw his utter indifference to the prospect which Hawkestone's celibacy opened to himself.

'And so do I. Now, my dear Harold, do see what you can do to persuade him. Can't you make him see how fond Lady Di is of him?'

'But is she?'

'Is she? Why, she's madly in love with him : and as to the duke, I don't think there's anything in the world he'd like so much for his daughter.'

'Possibly,' said Harold, who felt the inconvenience of the conversation every minute. 'Well, then, you persuade Hawkestone of that. Make him see that he ought to propose.'

'But, my dear Lord Falconberg, I don't think he ought.'

'Well, then,' said the old gentleman, entirely out of temper with Harold's scruples, 'why the d—l don't you propose to her yourself?'

Harold laughed, even though there came over him a dark cloud, at the extreme determination of Lord Falconberg to marry somebody. Then he said, not very gravely, 'Perhaps she wouldn't accept me, with her very strong feelings in favour of Hawkestone.'

'Possibly not, if you talked to her in the tone you talk to me. But just tell me what is to become of the title.'

Do you know that after you it goes to your Cousin George?’

‘You distress yourself, Lord Falconberg, unnecessarily. Let us hope that Hawkestone may yet live many years, and perhaps marry. At all events we might get a grant from the crown to settle the title and estate on Helen’s heirs——’

‘Helen!’ said Lord Falconberg, for the first time seriously out of temper: ‘Lady Helen is the worst of you all. She’s refused Farina, and half the best matches in London. And as to consulting me, she’d as soon think of consulting the librarian of the British Museum: she’d much rather take the opinion of that Popish Ritualist, Carfax.’ Saying which, Lord Falconberg walked out of the room, leaving Harold Falcon to make the best of his uncle’s peculiar disposition for match-making.





CHAPTER XXIX.

AFTER THE SEASON IN SCOTLAND.

ONE more summer was drawing to a close. It had been warm and dry, and by no means formed the basis of three hot days and a thunder-storm, according to foreign notions of our climate. It had been unusually lengthened; and even now in September the days were hot until the sun went down, when some care was requisite with persons affected as Lord Hawkestone had been; though he seemed to think less of his ailments day by day.

Most of the world, that world which consists of men of wealth and position, the swells, or, as the snobs call them with a tenfold vulgarity, the upper ten thousand, had long left town. The ministers and their supporters, careless of the futility of their past labours, and viewing with indifference their constituents through the diminishing end of the telescope, were amusing themselves in Scotland, Ireland, Norway, the German baths, or on the waters of the Mediterranean. Their opponents, whose bitterest invectives and most amusingly-devised satire had been lately hurled against them, were now with them, enjoying the notion that the people whom they had left in the lurch on the various questions submitted to their consideration, were just as well off without their settlement, and could afford to wait for extension of the franchise, or the abolition of a tax, until it was nearly time to use the one or pay the other. Both sides were equally honest in one respect. They had both ceased to make a capital of their sincerity of purpose, until the same commodity should be called

into requisition by equal emergencies. 'Talk not to me, Sir, of political integrity,' said my old friend, Sir Digbury Cheek; 'rather tell me of the honesty of the turf;' a tremendous facer for both these respectable parties, and coming from a man who divided the whole of his time pretty evenly between them.

Now, could Sir Digbury see nothing but evil in his own occupations, or was he fain to occupy himself in them only with the view to setting an example of virtue to a degenerate age?

Lord Falconberg was gone to Scotland, to his place in Aberdeenshire. He had taken with him Lord Hawkestone and Harold, who had organised a strong force against the grouse, which were said to be strong and plentiful. Trevelyan, who was flourishing upon the ruins of an estate which no nursing could possibly put right, was going down; and Beauchamp, whose estate had been growing beneath his fostering hand, while the other was decreasing. Lady Helen was gone to spend a month at the duke's at Silverthorn. There were half-a-dozen more expected at different times, between the twelfth of August and the end of September, when the Falconberg party was to break up for the winter.

Gorham Lodge was small, having been used chiefly as a shooting-lodge, and nothing more. It had been enlarged to admit of the late Lady Falconberg accompanying her husband. He had been great on the moors as a young man, and was not sorry to have so agreeable a companion after the turmoil of a London season, in which the best of married people see but little of one another. It had accommodation enough for bachelors, but the married couples were obliged to be limited in number, and indifferent to the extent of Windsor Castle comforts.

There was plenty of shooting for everybody. The drag, or rather the omnibus, with four well-bred little horses, took men, dogs, luncheon, guns, and ammunition to the foot of the moors, when it was requisite to begin some distance from home. Harold Falcon stood with the reins in his hand.

'Now, then, are you fellows nearly ready—all the guns inside? Where's Hawkestone? Who's coming up with

me? Here, Chesterton, come up here. I know Hawkestone likes sitting behind.' And within a minute the whole party are on their way to the moors.

'Where do we begin, Scott?' inquired Harold Falcon of one of the keepers on the roof of the omnibus, as they neared the place in the fresh morning air.

'Birnside moor, Sir,' says the man. 'My lord will beat the lower ground, and meet ye at lunch, close by the old pit where you and Lord Hawkestone killed so many birds last year. It's easy walking; and if my lord begins about eleven o'clock, and beats slowly on, he'll be on the lower hillie before ye've done wi' Birnside.' And in a very short time Harold pulls up, and they all get down from or out of the omnibus.

I presume a day's grouse shooting has been described somewhere or other before this. The 'Sporting Magazine,' or 'Baily,' or 'Bell's Life,' or the 'Field,' must have devoted a few pages to tell how the thing is managed. If not, I regret that it is out of all reason to delay the reader of a novel for that purpose. It may suffice to say that we divided our forces; two were sent over the hill, two more beat the top of it, and those unambitious of climbing, were allowed to walk through the heavy-tangled heather at the bottom. We give that to Lord Hawkestone and his old friend Barrington, who like to saunter along steadily, smoking and chatting. Then there stands one of the setters, old Bang, half-way up the hill, and the keeper so-hos him, while the guns approach—but the birds have run; and by the time Hawkestone and his friend have reached the spot, Bang is off, and, taking one swing round to head the birds, comes to a dead point right down below, at least four hundred yards from his master.

'Now, Barrington, it's all right; they're there, and Bang will never move;' in consideration of which the noble lord proceeds to slip and slide at his leisure down the side of a house, rendered rather worse by the slippery nature of the thatch, until, reaching the dogs, the birds rise slowly and noiselessly; and out of twelve that rise, four will rise no more.

A long way off to the right, the distant report of Harold's gun, with that of his friend Beauchamp's, is

heard at no long intervals ; and there is but little reason to doubt with what effect, even before the show at luncheon settles that question. 'And here comes my father,' says Lord Hawkestone, as they all greet the aristocratic old peer, whose bag still makes a handsome addition to the seventy or eighty brace which have fallen to the other guns.

Then comes an hour of cheerful rest, and a pipe or cigar after the luncheon, until an enthusiastic youngster suggests that it's nearly time to beat the other side of the hill ; and so it is. And when the drag once more is brought to meet them at the end of their beat, they are glad to put on their pea-jackets, and climb up or in with something less of alacrity than they turned out in the morning.

'How are you, Hawkestone?' says Chesterton, who had not been with him.

'Never felt better in my life. 'Pon my word, Scotland's far better for me than Naples. Old Lobel's an ass.'

'I've no doubt it would be, old fellow, if it was August here all the year round. We'll try the pool tomorrow, below the bridge, I vote ;' and by that time they were all at home again, and ready for dinner.

'Would anybody like to go down and try for a salmon?' inquired Lord Hawkestone, looking up at a gloomy sky, after luncheon, some of the party only being on the moors. 'Where's Mr. Beauchamp? he was in an hour or two ago.'

'He's gone with Lord Chesterton to try and get a roebuck, my lord. One was seen this morning over the low walls, not ten yards from the road, but Mr. Beauchamp had no gun with him.'

'Harold,' said Lord Hawkestone, turning back along a passage towards the gun-room, where he thought it not impossible his cousin might be, at the same moment throwing open the door. 'Ah ! there you are. Never mind about the guns ; come down and try for a salmon.'

Now I know nothing so disappointing as going down to try for a salmon. They never will run when you want them. I remember waiting ten days in Scotland, prepared, above all grouse-shooting, deer-stalking, or anything else, to kill a salmon. I never even saw one. They

tried hard to persuade me that I did, at the bottom of a deep hole, from which he was not to be moved. I don't think I did see him; and I remember that during the whole of that time only one salmon was taken, and that by the most cunning and unscrupulous of poachers.

Harold Falcon was of my way of thinking, and declined; 'But,' said he, 'I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll get a gun, and shoot some rabbits down the river, and pick you up below the bridge on my way back.' So they started. The park was lovely; and as every now and then a gleam of sunshine threw its light across the long avenue which led up to the house, the shadows of the huge beech trees waved to and fro. The deer started from the heather and ferns in which they were lying, and the rabbits ran quickly into the long grass, as the two men came heedlessly on. Half a mile off was a keeper's lodge, near the old stone bridge below the waterfall; and further on, towards the lodge-gate of the park, ran the broad and rapid river on which old Gorham Keep had been built. There remained of it part of the old tower, covered with ivy; and from the top of it, to which the visitor or wanderer clambered at the risk of his neck, might be seen a view which almost repaid the adventurer for his risk, unless he were more valuable than most of them are. 'See Gorham and die' ought certainly to have been the traveller's motto, in search of the picturesque. Having found it, there was yet another prospect, that of coming to grief afterwards. The two men walked on, Hawkestone with his hands in his pockets, for the rods and lines were at the keeper's lodge; Harold with his gun over his shoulder, and two or three dozen cartridges in his pouch.

'You seem better this year than usual, Hawkestone.'

'So well that I shall stay in England again this winter. I sent the two horses I bought last week down to Hawkestone, to be put in condition. With the four I have there, I shall be strong enough for as much hunting as Lobel will allow.'

'I don't think you care much about your continental life?'

'I never did. By-the-way, if I had gone back this year I meant to have called at Cleves on my road.'

‘Why at Cleves?’

‘You forget what I told you two years ago—about the boy I met there, with the handsome mother and gigantic grandfather.’

‘You told me about some handsome lad, whom you meant to make a painter of, but you left out Cleves; and though I recollect something of the proportions of the grandfather, the beauty of the mother you kept all to yourself.’

‘Did I? Well, they were features in the adventure, of course. The beauty of the woman was very great—the sort of beauty one rarely sees in either country, a mixture of the best parts of both.’

Here they reached the bridge, over which they both leant, the thoughts of either wandering away from the scene, and dwelling on something very foreign to rabbit-shooting or salmon-fishing in Scotland.

‘Hawkestone, my dear fellow, why don’t you think of marrying?’

‘Why don’t you?’ asked the other, rousing himself, and laughing.

‘Because I’ve nothing to marry upon.’

‘How mercenary you must think women. I dare say they are in a general way, but you ought not to think so.’

‘I don’t understand you, my dear Hawkestone. As to you—you ought to marry. You’ve a position to support a wife, and a name to hand down to posterity.’

‘Then I see how it is. Lord Falconberg has been talking to you.’

‘It’s a pity he doesn’t talk to you.’

‘So he does, Harold; but it’s always about you.’

Harold looked once more gloomily into the waters below the bridge, and nodding to his cousin, pursued his walk among the rough stones and boulders that formed a bank of the river. Hawkestone got out a keeper, a good salmon-rod, some flies, a landing-net, and a pair of fishing boots, and then walked on to some stones which stood half-way across the stream.



CHAPTER XXX.

A STRANGER.

HAROLD had been shooting with tolerable success for about a couple of hours, and was thinking of returning by a different route, to see how his cousin was getting on. He had been absorbed in his sport: for he was compelled to keep a sharp look-out, as the rabbits ran from underneath the rocks and boulders towards their holes, as he startled them from their retreats. As he made a snap shot every now and then, they would roll over, and, after one or two vain efforts to retain their footing, the wild little conies would fall into the river, whence old Port would leisurely retrieve them.

He had reached the bridge, which he was about to cross, and which here spanned the stream in even a more picturesque manner than the one at which we left Lord Hawkestone, when a rabbit jumped out from under a huge stone on the river's bank, and scampered off to the right among the rocks and shrubs which here fringed it. Harold put up his gun, and was about to pull the trigger, when he caught sight of a black hat and coat reclining against a stone almost in a line with his gun. He walked down to the object, and to his surprise, saw a stranger fast asleep. He had plenty of time to scrutinise his face and dress, and to guess at his occupation.

The stranger was very young, not more than seventeen or eighteen years of age. He was very good-looking, fair and light-haired; but as his eyes were closed, their

colour remained unknown. His dress was, in those days, sufficiently remarkable, and seems to have stolen a march on that of our own. It was of black velveteen, and the breeches were the same as our knickerbockers. The collars of his neck were thrown back from his throat, and were tied with a piece of pale blue silk, and fastened by a ring.

'Conceited young ass!' thought Harold, 'and yet what a good simple-looking face it is; and what's this—ah! I see—a painter. What an extraordinary thing it is, that a man can't have a taste for art without making a fool of himself in one way or another. Capital sketch too; how well the old keep comes in,' continued he to himself, looking still at the sketch. 'I suppose if he were two years older he'd have had a beard and moustache,' at which point in Harold's deliberations the conceited young ass sat up.

'I beg your pardon,' said Harold, returning the block (for the sketch was made on a block in water colours), and then hesitating instead of asking him, as he intended to have done, what he had come there for. Having the sketch still in his hand it was unnecessary. There was something in the young man's attitude and appearance too, now that he stood up, that made it difficult. So he said at length, returning him the sketch,

'I need scarcely ask you why you were here. You have chosen a lovely subject. It's the best view of the old castle in the neighbourhood.'

'I'm glad you like the sketch. I was afraid I might have been trespassing, for I'm a stranger.' Here he raised a slouched felt hat which he wore.

'An artist! We are accustomed to see them frequently here from London.'

'I am from Germany,' said the lad.

'And you were told of the beauties of Scotland, as fitter for your pencil——'

'Not altogether; I had a letter to deliver to an English nobleman, and I found that he had left London for Scotland. So it was necessary for me to come.' All this time Harold Falcon had been amused as well as surprised by the peculiarity with which the stranger spoke English. It was entirely without error, and without

accent, but with a sort of formality or pedantry, quite uncommon among our own countrymen, and with an ease quite unattainable by a foreigner.

‘Then having delivered your credentials elsewhere, you are now taking a tour professionally about the country? If you don’t mind coming with me I can show you an equally beautiful view of the castle and river, and a place where you can sketch without the risk of being shot,’ and then Harold told him of his narrow escape. From this time till they came within sight of the bridge and the keeper’s lodge, they talked of indifferent matters—sunsets—Walter Scott—Rhenish salmon and Rhenish wine.

‘Will you tell me the name of this place?’ said the stranger, taking up his sketch-book and his small box of colours, which had been lying by him when Harold Falcon had surprised him.

‘This is Gorham Keep ; and the house, which is what we call a shooting box or lodge in this country, belongs to Lord Falconberg.’

‘Lord Falconberg,’ repeated the young stranger to himself, and was then silent. At the same moment Scott, one of the keepers, passed, carrying some fishing-tackle on his shoulders. He touched his hat, and Harold asked him whether they had had any sport.

‘My lord hooked a good fish, and had to follow him ; he got into some deep water below the flats, and got over the side of the Giant’s Rock ; he broke the tackle, and my lord was obliged to give him up, Sir.’

‘And where is Lord Hawkestone? He’s so imprudent, Scott.’

‘Yes, Sir. It’s not much use if he gets hold of a salmon. He hooked him above the bridge, and away he goes, after making one splash, down stream.’ Scott was quite excited by the recollection, and the man of art stood staring with wonder while he proceeded. ‘At first my lord couldn’t get along, the bank’s so bad, and his line was nearly run out. He stopped a bit in the deep hole just above the bridge, and my lord wound up a yard or two of line, but he made a dart a minute after and went right underneath the arch nearest this side. My lord wouldn’t let him go, and when his line was out he

followed him again right through the arch, up to his neck in water—it was just below there, when he got on to the bank again, that he got over the Giant's Rock and cut the tackle. 'Ay, it war' a cannie fish,' and Scott was sorry for the loss of his fish, though he was obliged to admit after some consideration—'Ech, Sirs, it's lucky the line broke, or I doubt he'd a bin there till midnight;' saying which Scott went on his way and Harold on his.

'I thought you said this was Lord Falconberg's?'

'So I did,' replied Harold looking round.

'Then who's Lord Hawkestone? I thought you mentioned him just now.'

'He's Lord Falconberg's son, and I am his cousin.'

'It's Lord Hawkestone that I came here to see.'

'Then you shall see him to-morrow. But for his having got wet through you would have seen him now. And there's the bridge and the sketch of the ruins, which I promised to show you. Shall I tell Lord Hawkestone that you want to see him?'

'Thank you, I have no card,' said the young man. 'He will scarcely know who I am; but if you say that my name is Fellowes, and that I have come over from Germany. Stay, I have the letter with me, I believe,' upon which the young man produced from a side pocket of his sketch-book a letter addressed to Lord Hawkestone, in Grosvenor-square; and giving it to Harold with many thanks for his civility, and taking off his hat, as is the manner of his countrymen, turned to the survey of the landscape which Harold had recommended to his notice.

When Harold Falcon got to the lodge he found that Lord Hawkestone was gone to his room, and that the party were already come in from the moors; so he gave the letter he had received to his cousin's valet, and went to his own room to dress for dinner.

He was about finishing his toilette when Hawkestone came to him.

'Harold, the most extraordinary thing has happened!'

'Not very extraordinary, old fellow. I've known you lose a fish before to-day, when you ought to have killed him, and get wet through when you ought to have kept dry.'

'Weren't we talking about a German *protégé* of mine

whom I meant to see this year at Cleves if I went abroad after the October meeting?’

‘We were,’ and a light began to dawn upon Harold, but it was only a sort of twilight after all.

‘What do you think?—he’s here—the boy has arrived, and the letter you gave to Wrench was brought by him from his grandfather. Where did you get it?’

‘The youngster himself gave it me; he’s an intelligent young fellow, and had made the most charming sketch of the river and keep from the lower bridge. Strange to say I brought him up to look for you salmon-fishing, and then he told me he was come in search of Lord Hawkestone.’

‘Look here, Harold—you can do me a favour, and save me trouble.’

‘What is it?’

‘I’m going stalking to-morrow at Ballater. Long Range has the forest; and as to fishing and grouse, one gets tired of the thing. Now this youngster, George Fellowes he calls himself,—where had Harold heard that name before?—‘is really come to England to work; he can’t afford to live without it, and I certainly promised him my patronage as far as that goes. Will you see him for me, and say I shall be away for a few days? If he wants to go back to town, I suppose I shan’t be able to do anything for him till I go through. How unfortunate. I must be off early too, or I might have been able to do something for him.’

‘Oh, don’t distress yourself—I’ll do all I can in the matter.’

‘Thanks, Harold. Whatever you arrange for the present will satisfy me. I don’t know yet whether he is to study high-art or law. I suppose I must send him to work with old Madder, or ask Dryden’s advice.’ And as the dinner-bell rang at that moment, both Hawkestone and Harold ran down stairs.

Harold Falcon fulfilled scrupulously his promise to his cousin. It was not difficult. Mr. Fellowes stated candidly and explicitly his views. His first object was a profession—if possible as a painter; if not, as anything that would enable him to live in town. Henceforth he was to be an Englishman. He had also a definite object

unrevealed, for which he was to live in London, or its immediate vicinity. 'Could Mr. Falcon assist him in any way in the promotion of these objects?' Well, it was not easy to do; and Harold wished Hawkestone had waited to receive his own *protégé*. Yes, there was one thing he could do. Money Harold had always found to be the great stumbling-block in his life. He couldn't give it without hurting the man's feelings; but he might save it. Would Mr. Fellowes go to Egmont, and make his house his home till Lord Hawkestone or he came to town? He had no other advice to give, and in the long-run it was accepted. At all events the old housekeeper would find him what he wanted, and it was something to have escaped the mercies of a London lodging-house keeper.





CHAPTER XXXI.

A CHANGE OF QUARTERS.

LONG RANGE had Ballater, and the deer forest attached to it; and he had into the bargain a capital house, a substantial stone house, filled from top to bottom with a most cheerful set of people. 'Youth at the helm, and Pleasure at the prow,' the ship went gaily through the waters. Youth, in fact, managed to steer exactly where it liked; and at the present time, after running through the moors one day and the forest the next, it shot right ahead at night into the small hours of the morning—short whist and grilled bones. This is not the way to shoot, so as to hit anything; but it was an adjunct to the general sport quite in accordance with its followers. Early hours are only symbols of youthful years. It may be true that 'youth is a blunder, manhood a strength, old age a regret.' I forget who says so. I dare say he is right. Manhood is a struggle to get out of the blunders which youth has committed, and old age is a regret that manhood can't do so. I like youth,—I like blunders, especially when they include grouse-shooting, deer-stalking, and a rubber, not too high, but as late as you please.

Mrs. Long Range was a charming person, and her house in Scotland one of the pleasantest possible to go to. In London women will say ill-natured things, and they pretended that she was not in the best set because she had not been always quite as well behaved as she should have been. I know she was all right in Scotland: and it seems to me to be a very poor compliment to the

Presbyterian ladies, to say that some people don't care where they go in Scotland as long as they are allowed to pick and choose in Belgravia. Be that as it may, there was no harm in Mrs. Long Range now, and she had a very respectable set of people staying with her.

At one o'clock in the morning of a fine and successful day's shooting in the beginning of September, when the grouse are really worth killing, and before which your real professor professes to despise the art which brings them to bag, there sat round a comfortable card-table four young gentlemen, on whom time had made no sort of mark, and with whom fatigue seemed to have been equally lenient. Four, did I say? no, three. To say that the fourth was the youngest of the party, would have been to put him in his second childhood: a rank libel. But he was upwards of seventy, fresh, hale, hearty: had been shooting all day; and was just now concluding a rubber and a cigar, previous to retirement for the night.

Sir Jacob Hardiman was one of the very cheeriest, most jovial, and most uncompromising of her Majesty's Dust-collecting Commissioners.

'What! the ten of diamonds,' exclaimed the old gentleman, reddening up as he resigned the lost trick. 'Why, Armitage, what the devil have you been about! You played a small one second hand, and let Spalding's nine make, when there were but three in, and you held two of them. Good Heavens! my dear fellow, you sacrificed my ace of trumps, and lost us the game.'

Armitage woke up. 'What's the matter? Oh, no,—did I, though? 'pon my soul, Sir Jacob, I'm deuced sorry—but I thought——'

'Oh! it's no use to think at whist; you ought to——' here the door opened, and a laughing, noisy crew, who had been smoking elsewhere, broke in upon the quiet of the rubber.

'Hallo,' said the crew, 'Armitage again. He's always doing it, Sir Jacob. Quite unfit to live with young fellows like you. Armitage, you'd better go to bed.'

'Well, I suppose there's no more whist, so I will. I've been asleep the last hour: here, I owe thirty-two and sixpence to somebody,' and depositing it upon the card-table Armitage went to bed, nothing loth.

‘Spalding the keeper’s been here to-night, and says the big hart has been tracked ; I said we couldn’t go to-morrow, but that we’d start early the morning after, and be at the shealing by daybreak. Hawkestone’s coming to-morrow, and he’ll enjoy it. He’s one of the best stalkers in this country.’

‘Did the keeper say that ? Who heard him ?’

‘I did,’ says Lord Pall Mall.

‘That’s nothing—you couldn’t understand him if you did.’

‘But Long Range heard him too.’

‘That’s another matter. A man’s bound to understand his own servants, as much as they’re bound to obey him. I believe Long Range has an inkling of what’s meant when McRothery tells him anything ; but I defy anyone else in the house to be within any reach of it.’

‘He told me all about the big hart the day before yesterday ; but as I didn’t know exactly what he meant I held my tongue about it. Bore to live in the country when one don’t know the language.’

‘Well ! Long Range wants Hawkestone to have a chance at the big hart, and you fellows are to arrange who will go with him. He’s just as likely to take three days’ stalking as one ; but you may get other deer looking for him,’ said Leicester—a very handsome man and a colonel of the Guards.

‘All right. We’ll settle to-morrow, colonel ; now for one glass of soda and brandy, and I’m for bed,’ said Spalding, lieutenant and captain of the same regiment. Colonel Leicester laughed. ‘When I was a youngster we didn’t look at soda-water, and as to brandy, we regarded it as the strong drink of revolutionary principles. Claret was the drink for the London season, and port for the shires. It’s brandy and soda that kills so many of you.’ With which advice the colonel took his candle and went to bed.

‘I say, Spalding, is the “big hart” the thing McRothery calls the muckle something or other of Ben something else ?’ inquired Pall Mall.

‘Yes : and if half he says of him is true he must be the devil. I’m sure he thinks so—he describes him as big as a young elephant, as wild as an eagle, and as savage as

a Saturday Reviewer. There's a mystery attached to the beast in his mind, which renders him quite incapable of being brought down except by the ball of what he's pleased to call a "deeing mon."

'He's a pleasant, cheerful companion to persuade us all to go in pursuit of him.'

'Oh, his idea is not that we're going to die, but that we shall not any of us get within a mile of him. I know Hawkestone will try, and I for one should be glad to go with him.'

And the next day Lord Hawkestone arrived in time for dinner.

I dare say some of my readers, especially those who are sportsmen, would like to know something about the big hart, or the muckle hart, of Ben Falloch. In truth, he was a magnificent beast, according to the accounts of those who had seen him, and they were not few. Several attempts had been made to get near him, but whether his senses bore a proportion to his size, or luck had favoured him, I cannot say: he had scarcely ever been within shot. Twice, indeed, Mr. McRothery himself had missed him, or had done him no material injury, which was quite enough for that gentleman to build up a superstition of a somewhat German character. From the pace at which the muckle hart had gone off, however, he seemed to trust quite as much to his own strength and activity as to the devil, who sooner or later (most likely sooner) would have betrayed him. The keeper too administered some consolation to himself. One of two cases was applicable. He was himself not a 'deeing mon,' and it was no disgrace to him to be foiled by the enemy of mankind.

Long Range took a totally different view of the matter, perhaps a truer and more sensible one. Whenever he had gone after this identical stag—and he had a great anxiety to get him—he had been foiled by untoward accidents: the wind was wrong: once a sudden fog had come on, and Long Range had nearly had to sleep in a turf hut or shealing with his keeper: an old cock grouse had spoilt his sport another time, by startling the stag when nearly within range: and once he had palpably missed him from over-anxiety. There was no doubt about his being a very fine stag; and seen by the side of

others, as he had been, he appeared almost gigantic. It seemed a regular Herculean labour to get hold of this brazen-faced gentleman, who showed them a clean pair of heels just when it would have been convenient that he should have waited. He had a glorious mane, and a most royal head, to which belonged the quickest eyes and the acutest scent in the forest. As Long Range observed to Mrs. Long Range, 'My dear, these are all very good at grouse, and at dinner, and I don't think we could have got a pleasanter party into the house; but as to stalking such a deer as that, Florence Dimple might as well try to stalk Lord Farina, and you know how much chance there'd be of that coming off. I'll get Hawkestone over here, and then we shall have a chance.'

When Lord Hawkestone turned out of bed it was rather earlier than he was accustomed to; but he was bitten with an anxiety to see this mysterious beast. His host, Captain Spalding, McRothery, an active gillie, and a couple of magnificent deer-hounds, were awaiting him in front of the house. It was not long before they were on their journey.

On reaching the spot where their sport was to begin, they descended from the carriage, dismissed it by a circuitous route to the other side of the forest, and commenced operations.

Lord Hawkestone and Captain Spalding were placed under charge of McRothery, Mr. Long Range and the gillie went together; each party taking one hound.





CHAPTER XXXII.

HOW LORD HAWKESTONE KILLED THE BIG HART OF BEN FALLOCH.

THE country had nothing very remarkable in its features beyond that which everyone who has been in it must have seen. There was stretched to a vast distance in the foreground, not exactly a table-land, but a gently ascending space of rugged ground, interspersed with huge blocks of granite, broken ascents, black moorland, and coarse tufted grass in great abundance. All the lower part of this was bog, easily passable by man or cattle which used certain tracks, but not easily passable by a stranger, excepting with the greatest care. This long and wearisome ascent rose gradually from the morasses on the left towards the right; and as it spread higher and higher, it assumed a greater degree of rugged beauty and grandeur, until it lost itself among magnificent forests of pine and firs. From the centre of the forest stood out huge rocks, utterly bare to all appearance, in whose angular clefts the snow still lingered in places. It was here the sportsman sought the ptarmigan, after having passed the previous night at one of the lodges or huts to be met with in the lower and more sheltered parts of the forest. Three sides of this enormous extent of rugged, broken ground was occupied by thick trees, of the genus pine. Here and there, scattered over the undulations, and at the foot of the boulders, or even in their clefts, might be seen the graceful birches, united with hardy shrubs and other common trees.

Two remarkable features in the landscape require to be noticed. The first of these was the rough and stony road or path, which would scarcely admit a mule, but which formed the track across the moorland into the depths of the real forest (for it all goes under that name), and beyond it. It was deep and most difficult to travel, being slippery with heather, and encumbered with loose pointed stones. It looked like the dried-up bed of a furious torrent; so that to say that *the road* in question was built up by a natural wall of stones on each side, is to pay it a most unmerited compliment.

The second of these features was a burn, or rather a mountain-torrent, on the right-hand side of the so-called road, coming from the hills of the forest, now leaping, now trickling down among the boulders, until it crossed the road, and found its way through the bog beyond, serving for the purposes to which the inhabitants of the hamlet below had been taught to put water when it came in their way.

Now both of these features were serviceable for stalking, should the stags be, as they not unfrequently were, feeding or lying down in apparent security on this moorland; and having the shelter of the forest and the fastnesses beyond to fly to, should they be unexpectedly disturbed, of which they trusted to their senses of hearing or of smell to give them timely notice. There were three or four deep and narrow glens, through which they were accustomed to get to their shelter, and one of which Mr. Long Range and his gillie were now occupying, in the hope of cutting off the big hart, should he be disturbed anywhere on the open part of the forest.

The first hour's walking was tolerably easy, but was done in silence, and with due circumspection. Stags occasionally had been seen on the lower side of the hill. The wind blew crossways from the upper part of the valley. Nothing rewarded the first hour or two's exertions. Some hinds were seen, and Lord Hawkestone stopped and used his glass, but nothing was seen worth further consideration. As they advanced the stalking became harder. They passed through a dark gully, overhung with birch and other trees. The stones were loose and large, and McRothery was mysterious above measure.

The two sportsmen proceeded with much greater difficulty, as the road had become exceedingly steep at this spot. A halt was called, and Lord Hawkestone suggested whisky and some biscuits, which they had brought with them. This was within a quarter of a mile of the end of the ravine through which they were passing.

McRothery went first, and now proceeded with a degree of caution he had not yet used. In five minutes more they emerged from their enclosure, and a dead halt on the part of their leader necessitated the same from his followers. He didn't speak; he looked back, lying on his chest, and placed his finger on his lip. Lord Hawkestone crawled forward without speaking. Within a hundred yards of the stalkers, and on the left-hand side, consequently a little down-hill, stood a fine stag; not, however, the muckle hart of Ben Falloch. He had been feeding, but something had startled him. Lord Hawkestone beckoned to Spalding. As the latter raised himself but one inch too high, the stag started, luckily broadside on; and as Captain Spalding fired, he fell. He rose again, and staggered down the hill; but the dog and keeper were in pursuit, and in a few minutes all was over. But it was not the big hart.

Of course the attention of Lord Hawkestone was attracted to that side on which the stag had appeared; but having secured their prey, both men rose simultaneously. At that moment Hawkestone turned his head to the wind, and saw, at a very long distance off, what he plainly perceived to be a very fine head. He called McRothery to his assistance, who, without the aid of his glass, proclaimed it at once to be the identical stag of which they were in search.

Their plans were soon formed. It was clear that the hart had been disturbed by the shot, though, with the disadvantage of the wind, he had not clearly made out what might be the cause.

'Noo laird,' (as he called all English noblemen,) 'ye'll get him this night, though it's no sae easy as it looks.' He then pointed out a glen by which he would try to enter the forest at the farthest side. Then said Lord Hawkestone,

'The bed of the burn must be the place. It is not

more than two hundred yards from the trees, by the look of it. Move higher up towards the other pass; and when I can get round, if he isn't off at once, I'll strike the burn, and take my chance of a shot one side or the other.'

It succeeded admirably. For the big hart, somewhat reassured by hearing nothing more, and seeing nothing at all, began to feed, walking but leisurely towards the forest, and manifestly taking the burn in his way.

It was not difficult to get round to the burn higher up. The stones and trees were so many, and the inequalities of the ground, and the grass, so numerous, that sometimes walking erect from boulder to boulder, and then creeping from tuft to tuft, Lord Hawkestone struck the burn, when the sun was still high in heaven. His companions had had easier walking of it, and made their way to the proposed point, walking upright, and having, in the road and forest, no especial need of caution. By this means they got right round the stag, and when scented by him, were likely to drive him back to his own ground. The grand point was not to alarm him.

Nor was he alarmed. He continued his walk and his feed, just as calmly as an old Meltonian continues his sherry, and his ride together: and it was clear too that he meant crossing the burn.

In two bounds he jumped in and out, and in the same moment Lord Hawkestone struck it, and began his more careful investigation.

He had seldom lost sight of the stag, only when he slid behind a stone, or a group of trees, or when for a moment the ground frustrated his efforts. At the moment I speak of Hawkestone was within three hundred yards of him, but he could not see; and when he got opposite to him, speering over the rocky banks of the burn, he enjoyed such a thrill of delight as few but sportsmen ever do enjoy.

The stag was feeding quietly, still continuing his walk towards the trees, where he would be met by McRothery and Captain Spalding. He was about one hundred yards from the place whence Lord Hawkestone was surveying him, and it was necessary to proceed with the greatest caution. It was far the finest stag that had been seen.

Certainly never had Hawkestone seen his equal. He stood, however, with his haunches towards his enemy, and the position made it impossible to shoot with effect as he now was. Patience, the virtue we all put in practice when no other virtue or vice will avail, came to the sportsman's aid now. Lord Hawkestone waited, keeping his eyes still upon the magnificent beast.

To his astonishment, in a few minutes, the stag ceased grazing, and looked steadily forward; the mouthful of grass he had torn up remaining unchewed, and his fine eyes standing almost out of his head. Strange to say he showed undaunted courage: and with his head erect, advanced a step or two, and then stopped again. The wind, as I said, came down from that corner, and he must have been assured by it of mischief; for without any hesitation he turned quickly round, and made his way at a stately walk towards the burn. Lord Hawkestone saw that he could wait no longer, as the alarm of the stag would probably increase rather than diminish. He raised himself quietly, and aiming over the bank of the burn, immediately behind the shoulder, fired. The effect was instantaneous. The stag fell forward, but struggled with great difficulty towards the water, into which he appeared to roll heavily.

Lord Hawkestone walked as rapidly down the burn as he could, elated with his victory. Yes, there, within a hundred yards of him, lay the big hart of Ben Falloch. His head was lying upon a large stone, his limbs immersed in the water red with the blood; his mane floated in it, and his enormous antlers were supported by the bank of the burn. Lord Hawkestone approached him carelessly, confident of his full success. He stood by him, alternately watching him, and looking at the figures of McRothery and his companion, barely visible in the distance. They had started to walk across the hill when they had seen the smoke of the rifle and were assured of its success.

Lord Hawkestone laid aside his rifle, and stood listlessly by for some minutes, then he took hold of the antlers, with an idea of moving the head. In a moment, without the slightest notice, the bloodshot eyes opened, the stag appeared at once to recover a consciousness that

he was in the presence of his victor. The quivering limbs became instinct with life, and the mane, dripping with gore, stood erect. Lord Hawkestone, without letting go the antlers, unconsciously resisted ; when the stag, with a violent effort, freed himself, and with one dying bound threw himself upon him. They fell struggling against the granite stones of the bank, Hawkestone undermost, where he was compelled to lie, till McRothery came up, up to his middle in water, and almost unconscious from the pain of bruises and a broken collar-bone. The weight of the beast prevented Lord Hawkestone from freeing himself, and he was unable to get to his flask. The timely arrival of his late companions with some difficulty released him.

So absorbed were the three by the success of their morning expedition, that no sooner was the unfortunate man restored to consciousness than they began to arrange for the cleaning and transport of the stag. It was not till they had settled the question of the dead beast, that they seriously considered that of the living man. Hawkestone was wet through, bruised, and with a broken bone ; and having tied up the left arm, and drank as much whisky as he could, but not half enough to satisfy McRothery, he started to find Long Range, the carriage, the farm-house, and a doctor, by the shortest possible road, some five miles of rough walking.

‘I’ll tell you what, Spalding,’ said his lordship, ‘it’s lucky Falcon isn’t here, or I should catch it. He’d prophesy nothing short of death for me ;’ and in truth Lord Hawkestone looked white enough for anything, notwithstanding his courage. After a time he said,

‘If you’ll go on to the farm, I’ll sit here ; and smoke a cigar,’ added he, after a moment’s pause, to give confidence to his friend,—‘they can get the carriage as far as this, I should think.’

‘You’d better walk on, Hawkestone—you’re half wet through.’ So he did walk on, and at length the party came together. Long Range had killed a stag ; but it was a bad finish to a good day.

Of course a doctor came off in a great hurry ; when he had heard it was a nobleman who required his services he put on a speed. Doctors are not unlike the

rest of the world in that respect: but they are a great deal better in many other respects, and much worse paid. He couldn't do anything, and he honestly said so. The swelling and soreness was very great; he'd come again to-morrow; and in the meantime he had brought a little saline medicine, and requested that Lord Hawkestone should be kept quiet—Mr. Wrench might apply as much hot water to the bruises and collar-bone as he pleased: it would ease the stiffness and soreness, and give a better opportunity for further operations on the morrow.

But this morrow was not productive of satisfactory results. The collar-bone was reduced, as far as collar-bones can be—my own experience is somewhat great in breakages—but the patient was suffering from cold and slight fever. A cough in the case of Lord Hawkestone was a very bad symptom; which Mr. Wrench or somebody ought to have told Mr. Fitz-druggett, being quite sure that his lordship would say nothing at all about it.

'There were several morrows after this which were not much better, during which Mrs. Long Range did all in her power to relieve the pain and monotony of her guest, and the men who were not occupied with salmon, grouse, or deer, spent as much time as was good for their patient or pleasant to themselves in the sick man's room. The boisterous spirits never forgot that he was to be kept very quiet, so they didn't go often to see him.

About the fourth or fifth morning it became evident, upon the principle that a peer's life is as valuable to himself as a peasant's (only we used to read it the other way), that something more should be done. Doctor Fitz-druggett was not up to his work. At least, without saying so, he was not averse to another opinion (he felt that it was sure to be his own, which neutralised active benefit to the patient); two heads were better than one, &c., &c. (I have known them when equally thick to complicate business), and various other little aphorisms he launched; and it all ended in one messenger being sent to Lisleburgh, for Dr. Abercrombie, and another to Gorham for Harold Falcon, at his cousin's request.

Naturally they both came. The cousin was a real comfort, the physician was a real bore. He was one of those men who had traded all his life upon the mental weaknesses of his fellow-creatures. Tough, hard, educated on oatmeal porridge and mountain air, it is doubtful whether he believed in physical weakness. He was one of those men whose cleverness consisted in half-a-dozen theories driven to their utmost, and a general disregard of the *convenances* of society. He didn't agree with Fitz-druggett, that's one thing, but he wouldn't have agreed with an angel from heaven, scarcely with his own dinner, because it had not been ordered by himself.

'Collar-bone, indeed!' said he with a good strong accent, which I cannot spell, and the breadth of which is not compressible into the width of an ordinary page. 'What for does he go out fechtin wi' stags, as if his long legs would serve him for horns,' which polite speech was fully audible, but scarcely comprehensible to his hearers.

'Fitz-druggett has been drenching the mon as if he was a horse,' which was not strictly true, and, 'if they'd only let him alone, ablins he'd get well o' himself;' the most sensible thing he'd said yet. Then he took his oatmeal porridge,—in preference to salmon, cold grouse pie, and venison cutlets, which were ordered for him by Mrs. Long Range's housekeeper,—his leave and his fee, which latter his eccentricity did not urge him to refuse.

Before he went he took care to insult all the women he saw by stating that they laced too tight, and that they were quite as likely to have inflammation of the lungs as the gentleman up stairs, and had done quite as much to deserve it.

There could be no doubt however at the end of a few more days that Lord Hawkestone had inflammation of the lungs, and that it would go hard with him. Lord Falconberg was sent for, and came over from Gorham; and Lady Helen was written to, but something short of the truth was told her. So she did not come. Not however because, as Mrs. Long Range thought, she shared the prejudices of certain ladies of the *haute volée*.

To tell the truth, Mrs. Long Range was perfectly irreproachable, but her mother had not been so; and it is a duty mankind owes to heaven or to itself to take care that if the fathers have eaten sour grapes, the children's teeth shall be set on edge.

Lord Hawkestone was very ill. Lord Falconberg and Harold, who knew his delicacy of constitution, in his apparently healthy frame, were much alarmed: and as he was not able to be moved, were backwards and forwards constantly. The winter was coming, too, which made the matter worse. The virulence of the disease, however, under other management than that of Dr. Abercrombie, at length yielded to treatment; and in a month's time Lord Hawkestone was able to be taken home. A rest of a few days at Gorham seemed further to re-establish his health, or his strength: and by easy stages he set out for England. 'Let's go down to the cottage at Egmont, Harold, and be quiet. I'm afraid I shall not see the Houghton meeting this year.'

'Never mind; only try to get well. I can see about the horses for you. Railroads are some use, when one's in a hurry.' And that was the extent of the praise that Harold, or his cousin, an old four-in-hand man, could ever be got to lavish upon a system which has cost so much science, intelligence, labour, life, money, and rascality.

'What's to be done about the hounds, Harold?' said he again after a pause.

'I'll go down alternate weeks to Hawkestone, and Lady Helen can come up to you, till you get strong enough to go down with us. Lord Falconberg will be there, for he expects a large party to shoot,—the Delameres, Blakes, old Lady Morningfield, the Walkingtons, and I think the duke and duchess. By-the-bye, the duke I'm sure would take the management, and the kennels needn't be altered.' So it was settled that for the present Lord Hawkestone was to be an invalid, much to his chagrin, and that the party at Hawkestone Castle must do without him or his cousin.

The old lord was querulous, and didn't like it. But he dearly loved Hawkestone, so he gave his consent.

'I suppose he can't do without Harold, Helen?'

‘I don’t think he can, papa, he’s so dreadfully imprudent, and there’s nobody manages him like Harold. I really think he loves him almost as much as me.’

‘You couldn’t go, my dear; that’s impossible. I’ve all these people coming: I wish I’d put them off. I don’t feel equal to it, indeed I don’t.’ And as this was the first time in his life that Lord Falconberg had ever admitted that anything was too much for him, Lady Helen was not made happy by the expectation of her visitors.

‘And what have you done with that German boy, Harold?’ said Lord Hawkestone as they were about starting for England.

‘Really I quite forgot him until this moment; I suppose he’s at Egmont. I sent him there, and as he was to have bed and board till he heard further from us, I haven’t troubled myself about him. Mrs. Rice has been cooking for him, and he can do without a valet.’

‘And haven’t you heard from him since you started him?’

‘Yes, once; I got a letter from him to ask after you. The papers had informed him of your accident, but he said nothing about himself.’

‘I forgot to show you the letter which he brought with him, when you picked him up at the lower bridge. There it is: that will tell you something about his antecedents and his expectations; and you must take my word for his mother’s good looks.’ Saying which he handed the letter to Harold Falcon. Having extracted a closely-written note from the envelope, Harold ran his eye down it, and beheld the legible signature of his old acquaintance Bernhard Jansen.



CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE SQUIRE OF EGMONT.

NOW we must precede the two cousins to Egmont by a week or ten days, and visit the squire's house, as it was still called. It was not less altered than the person who sat in the squire's seat at church, but it retained its old name, like that.

In a fine large room, perfectly new in all its gilding and decoration, which was of the most elaborate description, stood the new squire himself on the morning in question. On his right-hand was the lady whom we have only once heard of as Mrs. Cripplegate, and near her again a very pretty girl in a *chaise longue*, whom the reader has before seen at Richmond, when Mr. Cripplegate took it into his head to introduce himself to Lord Hawkestone and Harold. This had happened about eighteen months before. All had grown, as things will grow—the alderman in girth, and his wife in rigidity, but his daughter only had improved.

The room which I had begun to describe was evidently set out as for some imposing and unlooked-for ceremony. It was longer in proportion to its size than it was broad; and in the centre, or rather more than half-way along it, the architect or the alderman had placed two handsome marble pillars; whether he expected the ceiling to tumble down or not I don't know, but it looked like it. The door was at one end, at the other was a very large and handsome fireplace, and over it a large window, an uncommon but not unpleasing arrangement. One side of the room looked on to the park, over a lovely country,

losing itself in a species of fog common to suburban landscape ; the other side was covered with such an assortment of modern pictures as might be expected in a house where money was made to do the work of taste and education. Of one thing you might be quite sure, the frames were most unexceptionable for depth and gilding.

But amid all these beauties—and there were several true beauties of art—the eye was at once attracted to the end of the room where the fireplace and window occupied the central space. On each side of that was a picture indeed. I have seen, and so may the reader have seen, some grand old daub in the house of some great man, representing the present peer's grandfather and grandmother, in some ambassadorial robes, which were worn at St. Petersburg or at Vienna, a daub presented to the then ambassador as a mark of more honour than discernment. These things are attractive : eminently so, as Gog and Magog in Guildhall, a peony in the button-hole of an undertaker, or the clock-tower at the Houses of Parliament. But not so startling as the pictures which presented themselves to the ravished sight on each side of the window. There was a full-breadth portrait of Alderman Cripplegate, Lord Mayor of London, and a full-length pendant of Mrs. Alderman Cripplegate, as she appeared on the auspicious night of their inaugural dinner. Nothing could be more rubicund, more brilliant ; and the subject not unfitted to the powers of a Rubens, could these degenerate days have produced a master as ambitious of immortality as the sitter.

Beneath each of these pictures, on the present occasion, two handsome chairs of a Louis quatorze pattern were placed, and an appropriate footstool in front of each. There was a dignity too, that is, a civic dignity, a prominence of stomach about the man, which tallied well with the curtains and general ornamentation of the room in which the three were come together. Miss Cripplegate looked much at her ease, but somewhat ashamed of the anticipated proceedings, while her mother drew herself into a rigidity of erection befitting the serious nature of the case.

‘Don't you think, pa dear, you'd better let me tell them by degrees ; they'll soon get accustomed to it.’

'I think not, my dear Isabella, there's a form in these things.'

'But you don't want me. I'm sure mamma doesn't want my support.'

'I think, my dear, you had better stay,' said mamma, 'it will be more becoming.'

'Oh, certainly, dear! if you wish it. Only you see, there's no chair for me——'

The young lady had no time to finish her speech before the door opened, and a deputation of servants arrived. There could have been none omitted; and considering there were but three people to wait upon, their numbers were imposing. Two by two they walked up the room, while the master and mistress took their seats upon the chairs beneath their pictures. From the supercilious-looking butler to the smallest kitchen-maid, who had rapidly covered up her grease-pots with a clean white apron, they were all there, to the number of thirteen or fourteen.

They formed a very elaborate semicircle round their master and mistress, the young lady having, after all, beaten a hasty retreat by a side door.

'My friends,' said the master, without getting up, but assuming a true Carlton-house attitude, such as Sir Thomas Lawrence delighted in. 'My friends,'—the under-groom pulled the front of his hair, for which he received an expressive though sly kick from the coachman, and a severe frown from the cook,—'I have called you together to-day, not to detain you many minutes—for work's work, and time's valuable—but to explain to you the honour'—and here he aspirated it so much that he had no more aspirates left for the end of his speech, 'which her Majesty has done me during the past week.' 'Yes, Sir,' was pronounced all in one word. 'And that answer brings me at once to the—the—backbone' (he was a fishmonger, you know) 'of my—my—what I have to say. You must no longer call me Sir.' 'No, Sir,' said they simultaneously, with one exception, the head-gardener, who replied, slowly and solemnly, 'No, Mum.'

I regret to say that the ladies-maid's mirth became almost reprehensible.

'I was going to say, my friends' (an expression which

implies that wholesome care which the rich man always has for his servants), 'that her Majesty has been graciously pleased to confer upon me the honour and title of knighthood.' Here a knife-cleaner had got so far as 'Three cheers for—' when he was checked by a housemaid, who pulled his hair so violently that what should have been 'the Queen,' ended in a prolonged 'Oh—oh—oh.'

'From this time, therefore,' continued Sir Samuel Cripplegate, 'you will always address your mistress as "my lady," on every occasion,' said he, adding emphasis by his pronunciation, 'you will address the late Mrs. Cripplegate as "my lady."' Here he halted to give due weight to the command.

'Yes, my lord,' said the gardener, again, whose simple mind had never yet separated the two; and who having lived in good places before, was quite ignorant of anything between a coronet and that charming equality which we all enjoy as ladies and gentlemen.

'No, my good man,' and Sir Cripplegate condescended to explain, 'you will call me, upon all occasions, Sir Samuel.'

'Yes, Sir Samuel,' shouted Mr. Splinters the coachman, and he was followed in due form, first in his euphonious address, and then out of the room.

They had no sooner left the room than Sir Samuel and Lady Cripplegate looked steadily at one another, and then, as though simultaneously smitten with the solemnity of the occasion, embraced.

There were other little acts of suzerainty practised by the worthy knight and dame; no, not quite that, Lady Margaret his wife—this was only the social phase that it assumed. For instance, he asked the curate, the doctor, and the lawyer of Egmont to dinner together, and nearly poisoned them. Fell asleep himself after the cloth was removed, and forgot to pass the wine. Took the chair at all parish meetings. Said the responses so loudly in church as to disturb the congregation, and addressed himself and his friends aloud as 'dearly beloved brethren'—showing thereby his great knowledge of the business, to say nothing of his natural intelligence. He ordered his keeper also to trap the foxes, 'destructive vermins,' and to let the old women on the estate have the rooks

at two-pence and the rabbits at four-pence apiece. He let a few acres of his land on building-lease at an enormous price, and managed so as to get it back into his own hands when the lessee could not fulfil the contract: and he did three or four little things of that sort, which proved him to be quite a pattern for *modern* squires, and just the sort of person to make himself generally respected.

Of one thing, however, you may be quite assured, Sir Samuel Cripplegate had plenty of money; and one truth he knew, that it was well not to give too much in order that he might have the more to give. The mere possession of money commands respect; we keep our love for the proper use of it.

Sir Cripplegate, as our intelligent neighbours would call him, or Sir Samuel, as we must now call him, had taken eighteen months in pulling down the old substantial-looking red-brick house which did for the late proprietor, a fine old gentleman of the old school, and in setting up in its place a very fine palatial residence of the Italian school. The offices were first-class, for the obvious reason that servants who serve great people must be well cared for: and when Lady Cripplegate intended to be condescending, which she announced as a duty the aristocracy owed to society, she invariably talked about her servants. It was scarcely appreciated by her professional neighbours, who were some of them gentlefolks, and had been accustomed to society at least as good as that of their new squire.

When the servants assembled for dinner on this 'appy day, as the old gentleman called it, they did not forget to drink his health. 'Mr. Sacks,' said Mrs. Glassfillan, 'have you plenty of sherry out at your end of the table?'

'Hample, Ma'am,' replied he, 'leastways, there's more, if it's wanted, in my pantry.'

'Then suppose we say grace,' and they obeyed the old Presbyterian's suggestion.

'This is a great honour that's fallen on the govenor, Splinters,' said the butler, sipping his port after the women were gone, and holding it up to the light. It wasn't quite the best, but very near it.

'Well, I suppose so. A borough knight's a great person, Mr. Sacks, in the Parliamentary Reform days. Jim,'

said he, at the same time addressing one of the stablemen, 'don't you forget; as our carriage is ordered at four precisely, you'd better help yourself at once.' And the young man complied so naturally, that no one would have believed but that it was almost a daily habit.

'And which carriage does missus—my lady, I mean—go out in to-day?'

'The bārouch; the chariot's gone up to some new place, the Herald's College, I think they calls it, to have some new harms painted on the panel, instead of the old crest. Besides, the borough knight's going too.'

'You're wrong, Splinters, indeed you are, depend on it you're wrong. He's no more of a borough knight than you nor me. A borough knight's a knight as serves in parliament for a borough. I lived with Sir Willoughby Greasepat, who was member for Dusthoe; and his eldest son, and he was member after his father's death, took the title too, and became Sir Tristram.' Here the two nodded cordially to one another and took another glass, while a footman and groom, and one or two who sat below the salt, went out. Mr. Splinters was evidently shy of asking questions, and yet his thirst for knowledge was so great as to overcome his reticence. He thought a minute or two, and then determined upon the advisability of being correct.

'The young lady don't take no title from this, I suppose, Sacks?'

'No, not exactly. Of course when a man's knighted, his family, 'specially the women, goes up with him. That's the nature of all light things,' says Mr. Sacks, who was a bit of a wag, 'but there's no title goes with 'em.'

'Well, then, she don't go down to dinner before Lady Helen Falcon?' again inquires Mr. Splinters in his ignorance.

'Lady Helen Falcon! bless your heart, Splinters,' replies the other, 'what are you thinking about? Lady Helen's a real lady! a regular out and outer.'

'And don't she look it, Sacks?' and here Splinters smacked his lips again, but as he filled his glass once more, it might have been at the port.

After sitting some time longer in contemplative silence, Splinters looked at his watch. He found he had plenty

of time yet, and Mrs. Glassfillan, who had been to change her dress, and had substituted a very handsome brown front for her respectable iron-gray natural produce of the morning, came in to take another glass with the gentlemen.

‘You must have seen a good deal of the world, Sacks, when you lived with those parliament gents,’ recommenced Splinters, making the most of his time with the port.

‘A good deal,’ says the other. ‘Mrs. Glassfillan, allow me, Ma’am.’

‘Queerish lot, I suppose. Got some rum stories to tell, I’ll be bound.’

‘Well, they have. Expensive work, I can tell you. Sometimes, too, as friendly as possible at home, there they was abusing one another in the House like anything ; we see it all in the papers. And then they’d come and eat and drink, and laugh at the ministers and the people and all.’

‘Laugh at the people, would they?’ said the old lady, who seemed rather staggered, and personally aggrieved.

‘I believe you. If you’d only heard ’em about Reform ! They are all alike. As to our wanting a vote ! what’s he to do with it, says one, when he’s got it ? They’d never a thought of it, if it hadn’t been for Potter and Bright, and these fellows, says another. They only want to serve their own turn, and then throw over both parties, says a third.’

‘Well, Sacks, I don’t see much use in a vote. Do you care about it yourself?’ asking which question Splinters put on a wise and serious face.

‘Yes, I do ; leastways about election times. Now take me, there’s a case in pint. I leave service, marries, most likely, Mrs. Glassfillan, though you do shake your head. Then I take a house, a pretty good house, and furnish it well, down Westminster way, or down Pimlico, or thereabouts ; and we take lodgers, live down stairs and let all the floors to well-to-do sort of people, who get their two hundred a-year or so, but no vote. Well, there comes an election, they want to obleege this one or that one, and they all come to me. I promise or not, as the case may be. If it’s a close fight, John Sacks’ vote becomes valuable.’

‘But that’s bribery,’ says Mr. Splinters sententiously.

‘Ha, ha, ha,’ laughs the other; ‘these are not times when every gent inquires why coals should have been on the rise, nor what makes butter and higgs and butchers’ meat twenty-five per cent. dearer for a month or two, especially if the right man wins. Why, Splinters, a vote ’ud be a very good thing for you.’

‘Would it now?’

‘Indeed it would. There’s your boy, he’s the very thing for the Excise, or something o’ that kind. There’s plenty of ’em; but I say, stick to the Excise. Lor, they used to come in shoals to Sir Willoughby’s. At last he told me he always bid a deal more for an unmarried vote; it saved him in two ways. There were no women to refuse, and no boys to provide for in the Customs. But those good times are gone.’

‘But I thought you was all for extending the franchise, Sacks?’

‘So I am; I’d like it myself, and master’s a Radical. But there’s a limit, you know, Splinters, there’s a limit; I shouldn’t go as far as him now.’

‘You wouldn’t?’ said Splinters, who wanted to learn and not to talk.

‘No, I wouldn’t, and I’ll tell you why. He’d like manhood suffrage; and then there’d be no more use and no more privilege in votes.’

‘And why so, Sacks? I don’t see it.’

‘Cos there’d be such a precious lot on us, that it ’ud ruin anyone as attempted to buy us. There’d never be another bid.’

‘Well, one thing I’d like to see righted,’ says Splinters, unhooking his wig and coat from a peg in the room, and preparing to go. ‘Our curate as comes here to dinner hasn’t got a vote, because he lives at Mrs. Mutton’s, in the village; and that ignorant beast Tulips, who pulls his hair to the squire, and sings out “Yes, my lord,” when he should a’ said “Yes, Sir Cripplegate,” has a vote, because he lives in a mud hovel outside o’ the village, which he calls his freehold,’ with which sensible remark Mr. Splinters buttoned his coat, and in a quarter of an hour our carriage came round.

My lady sat well forward; and if ever there was an ex-

cuse for exhibiting a not very handsome person to the gaze of the multitude it is when a sovereign's favour has added extraordinary lustre to a name. Sir Samuel was not disposed to blush the honour either ; he faced his wife and daughter with an air which should say, ' Our talents, our integrity, the great name of Cripplegate, and the unrivalled powers of the fishmongers combined, have gotten me this great victory. I wonder what this small unostentatious suburb thinks of itself now that it has the protecting ægis of true greatness thrown over it ? ' And then very naturally he thought that an occasion must be made for showing so much dignity to the world's eye by a dinner or two.

' My dear, I hear Captain Falcon has come down with his cousin, Lord Hawkestone.'

' I heard so, and that he is in delicate health.'

' Not too delicate to dine in a friendly way at the 'All, I hope, my lady.'

' Possibly not, my—Sir Samuel, I mean. But you must call upon his lordship first. Etiquette's everything, Sir Samuel, in such cases.' They had begun very well, and scarcely made a mistake over the unwonted nomenclature. If new-made honour forgets men's names, it is usually careful to remember its own titles.

' I believe, Lady Cripplegate, I have already had the honour of an introduction,' and he assumed considerable importance on that score. Sir Samuel loved to be a hero to his own wife ; assuredly he was not one to his own valet. The reader recollects the peculiarities of his introduction, and how little it had been sought for or appreciated. ' However, you're right, my lady. Splinters, stop at Captain Falcon's villa on the way back, and inquire for Lord Hawkestone. Suppose we offer that young man, the painter, Mr. Fellowes, a little fishing in the park ? Perhaps his lordship might like it, my dear. I think he seems amiable and most intelligent for a foreigner.' Sir Samuel was a good old Englishman to the backbone, at all events ; and never disguised his sentiments on that head.

' Not necessary at all, Sir Samuel,' said the lady, who was more prudent than her husband. ' You'll first find out what position he holds in Captain Falcon's house, as he announced himself to us as a professional artist ; and

then we can be guided by our experience of that position to retire or advance.'

If Sir Samuel was not so good at his grammar as he might have been, Lady Cripplegate never faltered. She believed that the right thing to do was to clothe nakedness in elaborate language, and she practised her belief.

'Captain Falcon not at home, and Lord Hawkestone not well enough to come down yet.—Bless me, not serious, I hope; be good enough to give these cards. The 'All,' with which Shibboleth, pronounced in a very loud voice, the footman mounted the box and Splinters drove home.





CHAPTER XXXIV

THE ARISTOCRACY AT EGMONT.



COMMENCE this chapter under a sense of great depression. I have been reading divers criticisms on the works of others, and the singular difference of opinion expressed by equally eminent persons leaves me in a melancholy uncertainty as to my own fate. There is one sort of book, I am told, which must give pleasure,—I don't say which will be universally successful, but which will give pleasure to some persons; and that is one so palpably full of faults that it must afford amusement to the reviewers. I do not desire to write such a book as this. Nor do I think it wise to deprecate criticism. When a man has once begun to publish he becomes public property; or rather, I should say, his works do, not himself. It ought to make no difference to his reviewers whether he be hump-backed, or blear-eyed; hyperion-locked, or satyr-skinned; whether he be a railway director or an archbishop—his book is the thing with which they are concerned. A writer is like a horse-owner: so long as he confines his canter to Rotten Row, what matters it to any man whether he goes fast or slow, or where he stops his horse? But so soon as he shall have emerged into daylight on Newmarket Heath, the world says that he is no longer his own master, and must accept of praise or dispraise, as he may be found to deserve the one or the other. There's another row called Paternoster Row, and I suppose I shall be told that's my place.

But I like criticism, and always try to profit by it. I'm a hardened offender now ; strong and tough, have had all my short terms, and am quite up to six months, or two years and hard labour. I can bear it without any fear of that despondent madness which produces suicide or matrimony in the young. Only, as I said, I like my books to bear it, not myself. They are bound to do so : calf-hide, Russia, and other things that are durable. I am neither calf-hide nor Russia. I recollect so well what I did. I determined to take advantage, when I was young and green, of all the suggestions I could gather from the critics. One was very lenient (indeed, I am happy to say that I have much to be thankful for), and after summing up more excellences even than I think I could lay claim to, said, 'But Mr. C. has something still to learn from Mr.— and Mrs.—.' And I found that I had : I had to learn to avoid their faults, if nothing else. I rushed to the libraries at once, and procured their works (for I am not much given to modern novelists, and when I have accomplished Lord Lytton, George Elliott, Whyte Melville, and one or two more, always retire upon Walter Scott, and Fielding, and other strong meats.) I think my zeal was thrown away, I know my time was. Mr.— was a strongly sensational writer, as I was afterwards told, of the Family Herald school, made up of impossible maniacs and strong-minded modern assassination. Mrs. — wrote bad English, and appeared to have discovered success in sesquipedalian or hendecasyllabic words. What other people *thought*, she *deemed*, and the substitution appeared so often that at last I gave it up, lest a spasmodic affection to substitute another highly improper word, but very like it, should eventually get the better of me.

Since that time I have attended to the suggestions of criticism, which I have challenged with a view to improvement, but have not studied the illustrious examples which modern bookmaking sets before me. But it really seems to me as difficult to learn to write as to learn to row. I wrote this within two days of the University boat race, when conflicting testimony declares that number four rowed with his back too much bent, and bow put no strength into his legs, or all into his legs ; that number seven ought to have been stroke, and stroke could not

be better ; that Oxford was too slow on the feather, and Cambridge too fast, and the reverse ; until the unfortunate subjects of these encouraging remarks might have been excused for refusing to row at all.

Now that's the case with us writers, who are honestly willing to learn, if the critics will but teach us. But we can learn nothing if one reviewer derides our plot and praises our style, while another declares our style to be saved by the excellence of our plot. Until some correct rules of criticism are published or acted upon, we must turn to the discerning public who pay us ; and if it pays us we cannot but believe in its honesty. Bread and butter is as necessary as fame, more so when meat is so dear as to be beyond the reach of Grub Street. What a misnomer ! So for the present, I am going for popularity : if anyone has anything to say against it, let him say it.

‘ At mihi plaudo

Ipse domi, simul ac nummos contemplor in arcâ.’

I shall congratulate myself at home when I get the cheque of my good friend, Mr. —.

When Lord Hawkestone got to London he was very tired, so tired as to wish to remain there, which he did, and saw his friend Lobel, while Harold came on to Egmont to make things comfortable.

Harold's mind was too troubled about George Fellowes, the half German or Dutch artist, whom he had made his guest for Hawkestone's sake. He felt a great anxiety to see the boy again, and to talk to him, and question him more closely than he had done. Nor could there be a better opportunity than for a few days while Lord Hawkestone recruited himself in London. There was nobody in town to tire him, and he had his man Wrench with him, who was a host in himself. Wrench was equal to any amount of parleying in the gate when his master was to be kept quiet.

The sight of this young George Fellowes brought back to Harold's mind very many reminiscences of a time gone by. Old Jansen's grandson ! and what extraordinary obligations existed between himself and Jansen. What wonderful pieces of paper had passed between them ;

what 'I.O.U,' and 'I promise to pay,' and 'ten to ones,' and 'twenty to ones,' and what a time of roystering, and steeplechasing, and general impecuniosity recurred to the captain from the contemplation of a rather good-looking, blue-eyed, yellow-haired boy of eighteen or nineteen.

'First of all,' said Harold Falcon to himself, he's too foreign-looking—it's artist-like, that long-hair and velvet coat, but not gentleman-like. I suppose he'll get over it after being in England some little time. I must have a talk to Hawkestone. Well, Mr. Fellowes, how do you like our country?' here he addressed the man himself, who had just walked in from the station, having spent the morning as usual at Peter McGilp's, an old artist friend of his grandfather, as he said.

'I've only seen the good side of it at present, Captain Falcon.'

'Where did you learn to speak English so well?'

'My grandfather lived a long time in this country, and my mother is an Englishwoman. She was born here, and so was her mother.'

'And your father?' said the captain, looking pretty hard at him.

'Died before I was born: I never knew him.'

'Are you bent upon your present occupation—I mean art?'

'I certainly prefer it to anything else. In Holland I had but one alternative, that or the army.'

'Why so?' said Harold, wondering why he should not have taken the latter.

'There's nothing else for a gentleman to do. I could be *negociant*, but I had no taste for it, and my mother wished for the army.'

'Why didn't you gratify her ambition?'

'Plait-il, Monsieur.' The fact is, he spoke English so well that it was possible to become too colloquial in one's expressions, and Harold had been so.

'I mean, why didn't you go into the army?'

'Because my grandfather had a knowledge of art himself, and thought—well, he was presumptuous perhaps—that I might make my fortune in England.' George Fellowes looked down and seemed ashamed of his own or his grandfather's effrontery.

'Fortune in England befalls a few, but few in anything but trade. I mean absolute trade. Every profession, even art, has its millionnaires—one, two, three, half-a-dozen, fortunes have been made by painting: novel-writing, well—no, hardly that—but a livelihood—but, the fortunes are made at the cost of many. Mediocrity starves. Now go up and dress for dinner, and we'll smoke a cigar together in my room afterwards.'

Ah! that dressing for dinner found him out. 'Dress for dinner! now, what does that mean?' said George Fellowes to himself—'dress for dinner; well! I must wash my hands and brush my hair: but for dressing, I don't see how I can do that—my other coat is scarcely as good as this.' But when he came down and saw Harold Falcon, he knew all about it, and apologised for not having *brought his clothes*. A very few days rectified that. It was a first step, and a very important one in the general move.

After dinner they went into Harold's own room. All the world knows what one's own room means: walking-sticks and umbrellas in the corners; driving whips (at least it used to be so) hanging along one side of the room; a very curious bit, capable of holding anything; a case of guns, Purday, Lancaster, and a Nock—there were no breech-loaders in those days; a large mahogany and glass wardrobe, it held cigars of all ages and sizes—which in cigars, by-the-way, are not necessarily coincident. There was a Burn's Justice, a Bell's Life, the Sporting Magazine, and Baily; a list of the Hawkestone kennels, a bailiff's book, an Army List on the table; a single-volumed novel, and a good library on the shelves. Could this be anything but one's own room?

'How do you find the neighbourhood—I'm afraid Lord Hawkestone's illness has made it rather dull for you, being here alone?' said he, good-humouredly.

'Oh no, I'm never dull! I had my sketch-book, and I've been to London most days to Mr. McGilp's. Sir Samuel Cripplegate has been very civil to me; I've been there fishing, and dined there twice.'

'Sir Samuel Cripplegate; now, who can he be?' said Harold to himself.

'Sir Samuel Cripplegate. He lives at the large Italian-

looking house in the park at the other end of the village.'

'Mr. Cripplegate, you mean—now I know—he's the new squire,' and Harold Falcon recalled the Richmond dinner, and the unexpected acquaintance they made.

'Ah! he's Sir Samuel now, a knight, or a baronet, or something of that sort. He left his card here to-day.' Harold was satisfied with the explanation, which the reader will have fully understood to be correct.

'Any family?' inquired the captain, after a long pause.

'A daughter,' and George Fellowes blushed; but blushes don't show by gas-light.

'Anybody else been to see you?'

'The clergyman. I like him; and I think he came here to ask after Lord Hawkestone. It was after we heard of his illness.'

'Yes. Fenwick's a good fellow: a gentleman; and that's not the case even with all the clergyman in England—nor in Germany,' said Harold, after a moment.

'We knew but one, and he was of the Reformed Church.'

'Is it a life that would suit you?' inquired his host, abruptly.

'What, at home?'

'No: here. You'll hardly go back again.'

'Why not? I'm here only to study. You forget, in your kindness, that I have a mother and a grandfather.'

Harold Falcon had not forgotten it. But he looked away from George Fellowes, and said nothing. Then they sat in silence for some time. At last, with an apparent effort, which was meant to look like ease, he said,

'You never showed me any likeness of your mother—have you one?'

'Here's a sketch that I took of her before I left Cleves.' And he handed over to Harold a book which he carried in the pocket of his velveteen coat. There could be no mistake as to the likeness. It was Margaret Jansen, with the addition of many years and much trouble.

It was on this very day that Sir Samuel Cripplegate had called.

In a day or two Lord Hawkestone followed his cousin into the country. He was very weak, but Egmont seemed to agree with him better than London; and in the course of the week he went out in the carriage. As he was difficult to manage when once on his legs, Harold did his best to keep him to the carriage as long as he could: but another week found him sauntering about, first in the garden, then in the road. In a very short time he chose to consider himself well, and would have his hack. And then he went to church.

It seems to be an established rule in suburban villages, and indeed in all country places, that all persons who show themselves at church are in full visiting order. If strangers arrive in a place, the circumstance of having said their prayers in public is a sign that the carpets are down. In the East that might be all very well—one spreads one's carpet for certain purposes. If a newly-married couple enter the temple, it is an understood thing that their privacy is over; that their minds are in a fit state for admitting visitors with some degree of patience. 'My dear, I think we should call, the Dobbins were at church this morning.' 'Why, my goodness, Mrs. Jones, she only lost her mother the week before last: Dobbin may like to be congrat—'. I mean that Dobbin may not feel the loss so deeply; but his wife—' 'Of course, my dear Jones, if his wife is well enough to go to church, she wishes people to call.' And so, it would seem, the neighbours thought of Lord Hawkestone.

All the people called to inquire; and it should be remarked that this had nothing extraordinary in it. If the poorest author or the most inconsiderable person of their circle had been ill, the suburban squires, clergymen, lawyers, bankers, brokers, or whatever occupations those populations embrace, would have been equally anxious to know how he was. They were not constrained by any regard for rank. They never are. They couldn't all ask Harold and his guest to dinner, because a time of sickness is not a time to begin such civilities, but all who could with any propriety did so.

Sir Samuel Cripplegate of course was among the number. Had he not extended his hospitality to the poor artist, and was he not now going to reap his reward? He certainly would have done so, but Hawkestone steadily refused all invitations. His health was really too bad for such dissipation, and night air was strictly forbidden.

The newly made knight was seriously disappointed that his good things should not be put into the mouth that cared nothing about them. It was rather troublesome to have to give them only to people who enjoyed them so much.

Generosity is not a rare virtue, excepting in its highest purity. Like sovereigns, it is very valuable, even with its alloy. That alloy is ostentation. Some people, a few really bad fellows, have no generosity at all; a great many possess a certain amount of it with much ostentation: a great number possess it with some ostentation: a very few possess the virtue without the alloy. Sir Samuel was of the second numerous class. He could, and loved, to spend money when it was known and talked about, and when great people could be made to participate in its pleasures. Wise men would not call this generosity at all; but wise men are as scarce as the truly generous. So we must accept generosity as we find it. Generous men for our purpose, therefore, are those who part freely with their money for any reason but pure selfishness, which can't be attributed to those who give to others, even for their own gratification; and Sir Samuel was one of these. Selfishness and self-love are not purely identical.

But Sir Samuel, notwithstanding his title, and my lady's rigidity of grammar, worthy of nothing less than the new Primer, and Miss Isabella's looks, who was a very good sort of lounging beauty, had made a mistake in the matter of foxes.

For —shire was a fox-hunting country; and as the great pleasure of sundry noblemen and gentlemen about it was to destroy foxes, of course it was their duty, and the duty of all men, who called themselves gentlemen, to preserve them.

'Harold, here's old Cripplegate's note, with an invita-

tion to dinner. I'm not going, of course ; but if you like a good dinner, I should think you're very likely to get it,' said his lordship, who looked none the better for his visit to church.

'Impossible to dine there. Why, he kills foxes.'

'My dear, what's this ?' says a country gentleman whom we have met elsewhere, but who now lives in — shire, fingering a note which his wife has just handed him. 'Sir Samuel and Lady Cripplegate request the pleasure of Mr. and Mrs. Tilbury Nogo's company at dinner.' 'Well, that's rather good ; why, he orders his keeper to trap foxes. No, certainly not. One can't expect lawyers, and merchants, and tradesmen, and these sort of cockneys by whom we're surrounded, to know much about fox-hunting ; but an ostentatious old snob, who calls himself a squire, and doesn't hunt or subscribe to the hounds, is a pretty fellow to trap the foxes and then ask people to dinner.'

And Mr. Tilbury Nogo's seemed to be a very general opinion.

As the winter advanced, however, all prospect of Lord Hawkestone's entering again into society was reluctantly given up. He grew manifestly weaker. The last glorious days of an English autumn found him reduced to the sunny side of their well-sheltered garden, and the winter to an arm-chair in Harold's own room. The alternative of Madeira or the south had been offered him, but had produced nothing but an assurance that he should be better in England. Lobel ceased to press it, and Cardiac had been honest enough never to recommend it. Lord Hawkestone took no less interest than usual in his daily occupations and his friends. He was no less careful of others, in that he required more care for himself. He often spoke seriously to Harold of the change that must come soon, and Harold had ceased to affect to misunderstand him.

Lord Falconberg had been two or three times to see his son for a few days together, bringing with him Lady Helen, and leaving her. Harold took these opportunities of going back with his uncle, who had an objection to being left alone, and yet seemed unwilling to shut up Hawkestone Castle entirely. You don't suppose that he

any longer clung to his former belief that Lord Hawkestone's lungs were not affected. At all events, Lady Helen's tearful eyes and Harold's assurances ought to have undeceived him. The business of the hounds had been easily arranged. The good duke did all that, and he and his duchess sincerely sympathised with Lord Falconberg. Lady Di, if the truth must be told, did something more. It might have been unmaidenly; I'm told it is, where no declaration has been made: but ladies in their own right have hearts very like those of milkmaids, only it's *mauvais ton* to show them. I do not approve myself of bottling up trumps. Among other things which had been subject of discussion between the cousins was the situation of George Fellowes in the house. After a time he was obliged to go, and was now studying high art with Mr. McGilp.

McGilp was a good, conscientious sort of man, as far as a Scotchman can be said to have a conscience where money is involved. He kept the young fellow to his work, gave him good instruction, took care that he was in betimes at night, and introduced him to a very moral and disagreeable set of men, none of whom had the education of gentlemen, and few the feelings. He did all this, partly because he thought it right, partly because he liked his old friend's grandson, and partly because he saw money to be made out of his intellect and exertions. The world is full of mixed motives—quite made up of them.

'Harold, if I'd foreseen this illness of mine I never would have bored you with that boy. This comes of art-patronage.'

Harold Falcon smiled at the notion, and said, 'I'm not bored with George Fellowes. Indeed, I've not seen him lately.'

'What's to be done with him now? I've arranged for his studying with McGilp; but I think he ought to go back, unless you feel sufficient interest to take him in hand, and that's hardly possible.'

'But indeed I do, my dear Hawkestone. I feel the greatest interest in him,' and here Harold looked down at his feet as he swung backwards and forwards in a rocking chair.

'I don't think I ever told you his history, or rather what I know of it,' said the one.

'I think you did not; but you seemed to know very little about him.' Upon which Lord Hawkestone repeated what the reader knows already of the meeting at Cleves.

'Jansen is an old acquaintance of mine,' said Harold Falcon. 'You never mentioned his name; and until you gave me his letter, I didn't know who the boy was.'

'And what do you know of him now beyond that?'

'Little enough, I admit. His mother was Jansen's daughter.'

'That I know. And his father?'

Harold Falcon hesitated some moments. 'His father? ah! there's the difficulty. His father is, I believe, a gentleman.'

'But you don't know who, Harold? Is his mother married?'

'Married? Well—yes—yes—certainly, she is married. But, Hawkestone, you spoke of the boy going back to Germany. I think he might be educated in England. I mean, might have the education of an English gentleman.'

'What, at a university?' said Hawkestone, with some surprise.

'Well—yes—or for the army; and, you see, if he should prove to be a gentleman's son—anyone of position, for instance—art, except of the highest quality, is a little questionable.' Harold's hesitation rather increased.

'Questionable! I think not, for a man likely to occupy his position. But my dear Harold, you seem to have some feeling or prejudice on the subject. Let us look at it fairly. I shall not live to do all I wish to do for him; not much more, probably. Well, well, Harold; never mind, old fellow,' for Harold had come over to his cousin, and had taken his hand in his own. 'They're not in want of money, I fancy, and we might do anything you liked about it. It's as well to ask the lad himself about such a thing. We'll talk it over another time.' And then they changed the conversation. Harold was not sorry; and soon after Lord Hawkestone rang for his

servant and went to bed. So did Harold, after a time ; and as he lay awake thinking of many things—the change that must come to his cousin, and in such case most probably to himself, he didn't feel satisfied that he had been quite candid enough. He made up his mind to be more so on another occasion.





CHAPTER XXXV.

LORD HAWKESTONE GOES HOME.

THE rarest thing in the world is a gentleman. The definition of the thing is very difficult. The number of the qualifications which go towards the formation is very great, and the combination very remarkable. Lord Falconberg was a perfect gentleman, as far as the character could be met with in the world. He had the essentials of high birth, a fine appearance, excellent taste and refinement in his person, occupations, furniture, horses, and *ménage*. He had been a good husband, a good father, a good master, and a good neighbour. He was generous without ostentation, and used the goods that Providence had given him without abuse. He was truthful without making others feel their want of candour. And these characteristics were bound together by a temper which had enabled him to pass through life without having transgressed their obligations. A bad-tempered man, whatever his breeding, his elegance, his education, must be constantly in danger of hurting somebody's feelings; but the great essential of a gentleman is a consideration for the poorest and most dependent of his acquaintance.

Besides this, Lord Falconberg was a religious man. That is, a man of religious feeling, of a firm and consistent faith. This does not mean that he was High Church, Low Church, Broad Church, or Narrow Church; that he judged this man or that by some arbitrary measure of his own; that he went to early mass or matins, or ate

fish in Lent, or did anything else which marked a bias for this side or that. He was too old as well as too honest for shams of any sort. It means only that he had a conscientious principle upon which he performed his duties, of a higher value than the simple necessity for setting an example to his poorer neighbours. Of course I don't mean to imply that the Sir Samuel Cripplegates of the world act in these matters upon any other principle.

Lord Falconberg had come to the villa at Egmont, at no slight inconvenience to himself; and, as he knew now, to see his only remaining son suffer. As the winter progressed, and as it was now December, it was plain that there could be but one termination to those sufferings. It had been hard to make the old lord see this at first. He so hoped and prayed that he might be spared this suffering. But it was not to be.

Once convinced of the truth, neither was Lord Falconberg a man to hesitate as to his course of action. He believed all the time he could spare from his numerous duties (and he never had neglected them), belonged to his son's couch. With all his feeling, too, he was loth to add one pang to what he knew must be the suffering of Lady Helen. Since the loss of her other brothers, Lord Hawkestone had been doubly dear to her. He had plenty of qualities to make him so, and Lady Helen, as we have seen, had encouraged no other to the exclusion of family ties.

And now they were assembled in this dreary season to watch the couch of the invalid, and to see fall the leaves, not of a natural autumn but of ripe spring. To remember what that fading strength had once been, its strong determinations and resolves; to wonder at the beauty which was even brighter, and the mind which was so calm and clear, in its decay; and to guess what immortality must appear to be to such a man, when all the dignities, pleasures, and affections of life were going to be soon relinquished without a sigh. Verily, he set them a noble example of patience and consideration, which they were not slow to follow.

When Lady Helen was at Egmont, Lady Cripplegate had called upon her: and as Sir Samuel could not be

kept out he too had made the acquaintance of Lord Falconberg. The lady was more Johnsonian than ever in her periods, and the gentleman more oppressively pertinacious than usual; but neither made up for the interruption. Harold would have ruthlessly excluded them, and so would Lady Helen; but Lord Falconberg had pleaded their good intentions. So they were admitted and bored him considerably — but he was as courageous as an Indian at the stake.

‘Harold, has anything been done about George Fellowes lately?’

‘Yes,’ said Harold; ‘it was scarcely worth troubling you. He declined the cheque you sent him: I must say, most graciously. But he assured me his expenses had been hitherto within his income, and that his grandfather would supply him, when necessary. I own I liked his independence.’

‘So do I; but that’s no reason he should lose the benefit of one’s help.’

‘Perhaps not,’ said Harold; ‘but we may have a better opportunity of serving him in his profession; or——’

‘Well, my dear fellow, what’s the alternative?’ said Lord Hawkestone.

‘That of changing it altogether,’ replied his cousin.

‘I’ve no sort of objection; but men who won’t take money very seldom take advice. Do you know, my friend George has a will of his own?’

‘I think he has. Are the sketches he did for you, while here, so very clever?’

‘Yes: I think they are. My father says they are, and he’s a better judge than I am: but he thinks not enough to secure him a very high position as an artist; so that if anything else offered——’

‘I think I know of the very thing. My uncle wants a manager or agent.’

‘But, my dear Harold, he knows no more of business than——’ Harold Falcon certainly had taken a stride, but he interrupted his cousin by saying, ‘True, true; but if he’d had an education we could put him under old Planner at the home farm for six weeks, and the thing would be done. You see, Lord Falconberg looks so

well after everything, he really wants an active gentlemanly young fellow——’

‘My dear Harold, what would you have been fit for at that time of life?’

Now that was an *argumentum ad hominem* which staggered Harold, and set him thinking. But he seemed fully bent upon doing something or other for his cousin’s *protégé*; so he listened half convinced, while Hawkestone proceeded: ‘I know your kind intentions by the lad, Harold; let him go to Oxford, or get him a commission; but don’t let us have any fancy agents, idle young gentlemen, with a hunter or two, and a cob to visit the short horns and downs every day. You know my father, Harold, his business habits, and how it would distress him to find fault with a friend of ours.’

Harold saw his cousin was right, and said so. And at that moment Lord Falconberg entered the room, and after a few unimportant words turned abruptly to his nephew. ‘Harold, I want you to do me a favour. I’ve been idle since I came up here, and I feel less inclined to go down to Hawkestone than usual. Will you go down for me? There’s Williamson to see, and the arrangement about the new kennels. Helen wants to hear about her schools: there’s something wrong about the new master’s appointment—that can stand over; but the covers must be shot, and you must write to the men you want.’

‘There are certain men must be asked. Chesterton, and Carruthers, and your general party. There’s four days’ good shooting; and the partridges must be driven.’ This was a new fashion, lately introduced.

‘Well, I think so. There are a great many left, too many; and as to killing them to dogs, that’s out of the question.’ Lord Falconberg spoke as if he regretted the necessity, but felt it.

‘I suppose you’d like Markham to be asked, though he’s a very moderate shot.’

‘I think so, Harold, he’d feel it if we left him out. You must put him in a place where he’ll get easy shooting.’

‘And where he won’t shoot anybody else. He nearly made a vacancy in the Sixtieth last year. Nothing but

the keeper's hat saved the major. He was just behind old Funnel, when the shots came past him, and three corns were found in Funnel's hat.'

'Then put Funnel in front of him again,' said the old peer, laughing. 'By-the-way, there's a stable full of horses for you; and if you've no preference ride my new one for your first horse some day. I think you'll like him better than anything we've had for some time.'

After which conversation Harold Falcon went up to town, leaving Lord Falconberg and Lady Helen to look after the invalid.

The pleasures of cover-shooting, that is, of periodical cover-shooting, seem to be comparative, if we are to attach any importance to the columns of some of the sporting newspapers of the day. A battue is an abomination, cruel, unsportsmanlike, fit only for those who have neither spirit nor strength to enter upon the difficulties of legitimate sport. This is a very melancholy picture to draw of an amusement in which three-fourths of our aristocracy and squirearchy indulge, and appear to take so much delight, that year after year the *furor* increases. Well, a word or two on the subject may enlighten a benighted public, who are indebted for their experience to the impartial criticism of those who are either ignorant of the subject, or are wedded to the prejudices of a time long passed.

It is not unfrequently understood, and on some occasions asserted, that the guests travel down by the same train as the birds: that large hampers of tame pheasants from Leadenhall market, which may be counted by hundreds, are at least the staple exports of the London market; and that having been reared under hens in a cellar in the modern Babylon, they are transferred to the noble earls' covers at farthest but three days before. I can honestly aver that I never travelled down with any of Lord Falconberg's birds. If I did we didn't hit upon them at any of his battues. More determined rocketers, or long tails more alive to their own interests, I never saw. Easy to kill, yes,—if you held your gun straight, and it was a good strong-shooting Purday, and the birds were within moderate reach, they were easy to kill. Cruel, are we? we, I say, who like

shooting well stocked covers. If killing your birds clean and having them picked up and put in the cart at once, instead of taking a pot shot at a wild covey of birds, indiscriminately, while Ponto wags his sagacious tail and rushes all over the field in quest of what you have not killed, putting up any that happen to remain behind (for dogs, you know, do not down charge excepting under very favourable circumstances), then it is cruel.

But those critics should recollect that if Leadenhall market supplies the bouquet, it is the bouquet which supplies Leadenhall market: and but for the 'wholesale slaughter' so energetically denounced, what would become of Alderman Baconham's entertainments? With what grim disappointment would the Mansion House caterers hear that there were neither pheasants nor partridges to be met with; a pleasant thing indeed to depend upon the supplies which that fine sportsman, Longbow, with his valuable brace of prize setters, or team of clumbers, could supply! No, my good friends, if you will have great dinners and are fond of game, you, who have no large estates and magnificent woodlands of your own, thank the battues that in your short sighted policy you abuse, and rejoice when you see that your prince and his friends, and our great nobility and millionaire merchants and Stock Exchange princes, condescend to slaughter thousands more in a week than they can themselves eat or give away.

Harold Falcon had just these ideas that I have about the covers at Hawkestone. So had Hawkestone himself, and old Lord Falconberg. So as soon as he got to the Castle he set about making the necessary arrangements for a week in the covers; and as there was a hard frost on the ground, he made pretty sure of no refusals. The duke came *en garçon* of course, as Hawkestone was considered to be closed for the time, and no one more regretted the cause. Lord Chesterton, one of the best shots in England, was there, and Carruthers. Markham was disengaged, and would have made a point of being so, for the pleasure of displaying his skill. How very unconscious of their deficiencies some men are! He was always shooting at somebody's gaiters instead of a hare, and nothing but his execrable performances ren-

dered those indispensable accompaniments to a beater's costume safe within his reach. He came too with all sorts of guns, half-a-dozen of them, all new inventions, and on their construction was very great. Careless shot with a pair of strong heavy muzzle-loaders, and was great at partridge driving, and rabbits, shooting very forward at his pheasants, and sometimes missing them, as he knew the old lord liked his game killed clean. Harvey Westbrook was there too, with young Lord Claverhouse, a Scotch gentleman, who brought with him one of the keenest eyes and the most hearty appreciation of a battue from the wilds of his native country. His hand was practised in all the cunning of a north-country sportsman, whether with the gun, the rifle, or the rod. There were one or two more—light weights, younger brothers, or something of that sort. Harold had plenty to do with the morning's work. All were to be looked to, so that none at the end of the day should accuse him of partiality.

'Now, duke, if you'll stand still here behind this bush you'll get a shot or two, before long. We shall begin by driving. You've got Chesterton next to you, he won't shoot you. I've got Markham next to me;' and in a quarter of an hour or more a shout went forth, and the work of slaughter began.

Bang, bang, and lower down the line the duke heard firing in the distance.

'Confound them, they don't seem inclined to come this way.' 'Mark, mark over;' and as a strong covey came down with the wind, nearly knocking off the duke's hat, he turned and fired a right and left, the first only taking effect. Lord Chesterton was in a good place, and had already killed two brace. 'Mark, Chesterton,' and he had got another when that drive came to an end.

Then away they all went, not, as is supposed, in a dainty slipshod sort of way, but in line, with the beaters between, while every minute scared and scattered partridges rose, and were killed in a handsome manner, and the gun exchanged without stopping. 'Mark,' and away went a covey back over the heads of the beaters, three or four of which were stopped by the quickness of men

like Harold Falcon or Lord Chesterton, who let nothing escape them. 'Different sort of thing this, Harold, to the 12th. of August.'

'Yes, not quite such a certainty as an old cock grouse, with a brood ready to be kicked up under your feet as you want them. Mark, duke,' as a single bird rose, and swinging back went right away over his head, before the duke could get his gun to his shoulder. 'Well shot, Claverhouse,' who wiped the duke's eye in a most sportsmanlike manner. 'Here we are at our second drive; now then, Chesterton, if you'll stop here, I'll take the Duke and Claverhouse where I think they'll get some shooting this time,' and they did.

Then there came a strong but not very prolific cover to be beaten; and Harold prepared his guests for plenty of work, but not much shooting. He himself took the lion's share of the first. As they came towards the end of the cover he hurried the guns forward, while he walked through the wood with the beaters. 'Let 'em rise when you get outside, or you'll shoot us. The cover slopes a little downward towards the meadows.' But few were shot, as they rose and went down wind at the top of the high trees. At the end of the cover they began to cross the open, and here a bag was made.

Then came luncheon. 'Who killed the woodcock?'

'Markham,' said Careless; and Markham, to his intense gratification, was congratulated.

Then came more walking; another drive, which brought the number of partridges up to nearly a hundred; and then the principal cover of that day's beat. Here it must be admitted the grumblers had some grounds for their censures. There was nothing but shooting, from the time they got into the wood to the time they came out. Those who walked along with the keepers and beaters scarcely went a moment without a shot at hare or rabbit; while, at very close intervals, a shot was heard from one of the guns at the farther end of the wood. As they advanced the game became thicker on the ground, while every thicket produced its nide of pheasants, which, rising to the height of the trees, went down to the end of the cover, few getting back. And

here every gun was in requisition. 'Hold hard ; right,' and then up they got again.

'I've known a hundred and fifty pheasants killed in this corner,' says the duke, knocking over a brace, and handing his gun to his loader. 'Right,' cries the duke ; and again as the circle narrows the sticks go, and the pheasants rise again, not in hundreds, but by the score ; and as all the guns have now ranged themselves in the lane, the beating becomes regular, and the slaughter more vigorous. In spite of the gentlemen-sportsmen who write letters to the papers, and excite the sympathies of the middle-aged parsons in the shires, about snuff taking after the birds rise, and the magnificent behaviour of Carlo, it is known that on Tuesday the usual aristocratic party assembled to shoot the covers at Hawkestone Castle, and that the first day's sport realised one thousand head, of which four hundred and sixty-two were pheasants. Then came a list of the guests, the number of guns, and the regret that Lord Falconberg was unable to open his house as usual, in consequence of the serious indisposition of Lord Hawkestone.

'A capital show of pheasants, Harold, in the long cover.'

'Very good,' says Harold ; 'I hope you got some shooting. I think the other side of the river is better than this.'

'Scarcely possible,' replies another.

'Do you find much difficulty about the foxes?' inquires Lord Claverhouse.

'None whatever ; we've plenty of rabbits. The last cover you were in is one of our best fox covers. A certain find, and a capital country on all sides but one ; and that's the river, which they seldom cross.'

'What did you think of Hawkestone when you left Egmont?'

'He is certainly weaker, but not materially worse. What I fear for him most is the changeable weather in March. If he gets over that, perhaps he may come round ; but he never can be strong. You know he has always suffered, more or less, in the winter.'

'Poor fellow ! how fond he was of this meeting, and such a capital shot. I think Hawkestone shot as well as

you, Chesterton ; and that's a high compliment to pay him,' remarks the duke to Lord Chesterton.

'I'm sure he did. I never saw a man shoot better than he did last year ; he scarcely missed a bird. But no man can shoot these covers properly without being a pretty good shot.'

'Yes—requires straight powder, and a mind at ease,' said Markham, sententiously.

'Then you had no fear of your Christmas bills,' remarked Careless, 'to-day.'

'Not when I shot the woodcock,' replied the other.

'That's good,' said the party generally ; 'that's when he wiped your eye, Frank.'

'Light the billiard-room,' said Harold, after ringing the bell, 'and bring some more claret.'

And the following days were like the first ; and at the end of the week the party broke up. The frost continued, so on the Saturday Harold Falcon took a hack out of the stables, and went over to Williamson, one of his uncle's tenants, with whom he had business. Then he visited the kennels, where he found everything as it should be : and both hounds and horses the better for the rest they were having—the first break since the beginning of the season. Lady Helen's school was less in his way than the kennels, but it was a labour he would not willingly have missed. So he went, and carried away the report which the rector gave him. He finished his commissions towards four in the afternoon, and cantered back to the Castle.

As he entered the stable-yard, and gave his hack to one of the grooms about, the butler came out to meet him, bearing a paper parcel shaped like a letter. There had lately been established on this line a telegraphic wire, the use of which had been scarcely tested ; certainly never yet at the Castle. This was the letter, then, which had been sent from the station to Harold for immediate delivery. It had been in the house some hours, for the groom had no idea where Captain Falcon was gone when the messenger arrived at Hawkestone.

Harold opened it with fear and misgiving. 'Come as soon as you can, my brother is worse. From Lady Helen Falcon to Captain Falcon, Hawkestone Castle. Immediate.' And he had allowed all this time to elapse.

‘Stephens?’

‘Yes, Sir.’

‘Fetch me a railway time-table,’ from which Harold discovered that he could get a train at seven p.m., which would get him to Egmont by eleven that night. He telegraphed to that effect, and having ordered the brougham at the proper time, waited patiently, but still with fear and trembling, as when he had received the paper.

He had plenty to employ his mind. If his fears were correct, he had lost a valuable friend, and gained, as he thought, a valueless inheritance.

When he reached Egmont, Lord Hawkestone had been dead an hour.





CHAPTER XXXVI.

HAROLD FALCON SETTLES SOME OF HIS COUSIN'S AFFAIRS.

HAWKESTONE had at least three sincere mourners : a fair number in a world as selfish as ours. I will not take upon myself to say that he had not many more. He ought to have had. George Fellowes, for instance, had lost a friend quite as much as a patron ; for Harold Falcon had never pretended to feel the least regard for the young man personally, beyond the attempt to thwart his present career. The three undoubtedly sincere mourners over Hawkestone's grave were Lord Falconberg, Lady Helen, and Harold. The first was a man to feel this last blow very deeply. A variety of reasons, easily understood by his friends, made it especially severe. But Lord Falconberg was not a man to exhibit his feeling to the world. He believed it to be a duty to bear with fortitude the affliction from which, in his case, his rank and influence had not sheltered him. Besides this he believed that his own depression could only increase that of his daughter ; and Lady Helen, though somewhat like her father, had need of all the support his example could give her.

To Lady Helen the blow had come unexpectedly. She had a strong and hopeful mind (qualities which do not go always together) ; but not that patient strength which is a high characteristic of good women. These dare and do ; and while daring and doing, have hope and strength ; but their hopes are frustrated, and then they collapse ;

and the good women begin where the men have left off. Lady Helen clung very fondly to the brother she had just lost : and there was a reason for that too, which was known to nobody but herself. Confidence in such a woman as Lady Di was painful. She might have been all the better for talking about Lord Hawkestone to his sister, when there was a prospect of his marrying her. But Lady Helen would have been none the better for trusting her secrets to any female bosom but her own.

She did love her Cousin Harold. She could not help it, as far as sorrow for his early misbehaviour and consequent troubles went. She would have then given him all she was worth, as far as it was womanly and modest to do so. She now liked to have him near her : to know how dearly he loved her brother and father, and to feel how kind and considerate he always was to herself. Her love too was her own, and not a jealous love ; nor a violent, nor a corroding love. She did not want him to marry elsewhere, unless it would have added to his happiness. Even then she could have dispensed with this mark of his indifference to her own affection. But she would have made his wife her friend and his children her pets. And now it added to her other sorrows, to think that a great link between them was gone.

Harold Falcon's own grief was genuine, and his reflections varied. The position he now held was so different from any that he could have expected to hold, when a boy. When at Eton nobody ever thought of him as the possible possessor of an earldom and its corresponding powers. One great advantage of our public schools is that he would have been thrashed just as much when he deserved it, possibly a little more ; but the fact would have been none the less patent, and would have no less exercised its influence on his career : Harold in the Guards was a gentleman ; so were they all : and he was a gentleman, without any money, and with all the tastes which require money. His family was noble, but he was a long way from the enjoyment of the privileges of nobility. Five (as a money-lender once informed him) between him and the title, in calculating the chances, and four of them good lives. And yet here he was, not a young man, truly, but very far from an old one, heir to

the title of Falconberg, and one of the finest properties in England.

Then a very vivid recollection of a youth somewhat misspent came upon him, how much he had owed to Hawkestone's and his uncle's kindness, and, if they but knew all, how strangely he had requited them. To be sure, he had never contemplated the position, a dependent one, into which the early deaths of his cousins threw him. As his own master he might have acted foolishly, but he had wronged nobody. He could scarcely flatter himself with that conclusion now; and he discovered late in life that repentance was valuable as an exercise of the mind or a preventive, but inefficient for the annihilation of past follies. One subject gave him great regret. He, too, felt that a strong link between himself and his Cousin Helen was gone; and there were reasons, known only to himself, which made a constant residence with his uncle more distasteful than heretofore. For the present, however, he was not called upon to make any decision in that respect. Lord Falconberg and Lady Helen went down to Hawkestone Castle and remained there; and Harold stayed in Egmont with some business on hand for his uncle, connected with Lord Hawkestone.

Harold was no little sufferer in the midst of his reflections: he was like other people, always inclined to attribute present inconvenience to present misconduct; never was a greater mistake. The punishment comes according to circumstances, in this world or the next, quickly or slowly: of one thing only we can be certain, that it will come surely.

'Then, Harold, you'll go down to Newmarket,' said Lord Falconberg, 'and see about the horses, and have the old mare kept here, unless you like to have her sent down to Hawkestone.' This was said about six weeks after Lord Hawkestone's death, when the old lord was spending a few days in town.

'Yes, I'll see Littletop, and do as you wish about them. He wanted them sold after the last October meeting; but the gentleman had had a bad time of it, and there were so many studs in the market, I persuaded him not to send them to the hammer.'

'You'll be down at Hawkestone before the summer, Harold—my dear boy, you must come, I can't get on at all without you, now.' And Harold Falcon knew well the value of that little 'now,' that it gave the force of a command to what might have been a suggestion. So he promised; 'and, Harold, as there must be a dissolution at the end of the session, you'll not make any objection "now."'
—The cabalistic monosyllable again.

'Well, well, if you wish it.' And then old Lord Falconberg started for Hawkestone Castle, just as others were coming to town.

Harold went to Newmarket: where he found Mr. Littletop the trainer. He might have also felt sorrow for Lord Hawkestone's death. Indeed he did; for as he justly and practically remarked, 'He's one of those few gentleman that loves racin', not money. Consequently, he never interferes, and pays his trainer's bill regular.' And when Harold Falcon presented himself before the spruce, active, but rather stout little man, who was dressed in the height of the fashion, with only a trifle too much jewellery for anyone but a prosperous jockey, which he had been before he grew stout, he was received with a civility which was due to something more than his expectations.

'Well, captain, I thought we should see you at Newmarket now.' This word 'now' seemed to have an equal prominence with Mr. Littletop as in Lord Falconberg's mouth. 'Now!' everybody would say 'now;' and the reminiscences conjured up by it ought to have been agreeable, but they were not.

'No! I don't feel much inclined to go on with them. There's only one of them I should care about besides the mare; and Lord Hawkestone's wish was that she should be taken out of training, and sent to Egmont.'

'And what do you propose to do with the other four? The Hawk's a good 'oss, Sir; might be made to win a good handicap or two, captain, if we keep him back long enough.' This was perfectly true, but Harold Falcon did not view the horses with the favourable eyes of his trainer.

'I propose to sell them if I can get a customer. What are they worth, Littletop?'

'Good bit o' money, Sir. I should say the Hawk's

worth seven or eight hundred, and the rest would make a thousand between 'em,—near upon two thousand, I should say.' Saying which Mr. Littletop picked a piece of a new shoot from the hedgerow, and began biting it, relapsing at the same time into silence.

'Then you'd better sell 'em. See Mr. Tattersall about them, and if any of the nominations stand good they must go subject to their engagements.'

In the Rutland Arms, in a comfortable room, in the mean time sat two gentlemen; one was smoking a cigar, and the other swallowing some of the best new bread, butter, and cheese that could be put before a man. He had been seeing his horses, and was lunching hastily, while he waited for his fly.

'So you like the Hawk, Shanker, do you?' Mr. Shanker began life as a Scotch artisan in a Birmingham button manufactory, and had risen to great eminence by industry in his present profession, which was the suborning of jockeys, stable-boys, and occasionally their masters. He owned horses himself, but ran them under another name.

'Yes, I do verra much; he'd be a serviceable horse to you, Sir Martin, if ye got him at the right figure, and put 'em into other hands.' Sir Martin Gale was a young baronet, as green as he was young, and exactly the person that would have been serviceable to Mr. Shanker.

'But he never runs anywhere but second. He's the most expensive horse a man can have. Just good enough to back, and never to win.'

Mr. Shanker put his finger to his nose as he swallowed his last bit of bread and cheese. 'Littletop knows his business; Lord Hawkestone was a gude master, and paid regular, whether he won or lost. There's some in Littletop's stable that must win, or they couldn't pay at all. Buy the horse and put 'em into different company. Buy the lot, ye'll get 'em cheaper, and I'll take 'em in for ye. Send 'em to Nat Shifty in my name, he's plenty of room. Eh, mon, there's Lord Northdown, hasn't one that's within a stone o' t' Hawk for a mile, wins half the handicaps in England, because he looks after it himself, and puts 'em into the right company.' With which Mr.

Shanker rang the bell and ordered his fly round, leaving Sir Martin Gale to think over the advice.

He did so to some purpose, and had a most prosperous season with the Hawk, which he bought with the rest of the stud. He's now at Boulogne, having backed all Shanker's horses and some of his bills. The latter, when the confederacy was broken up, proved to be a very unfortunate speculation. However, the legs will be glad to hear that the inconvenience is only temporary.

'I saw Falcon in Newmarket coming away from Little-top's; I suppose he'll begin again now on his own account,' said Major Stapleton, a member of the jockey club, and just now the owner of a much-coveted Two Thousand favourite, the best public runner out.

'I think not,' said Lord Belleisle, to whom the major addressed himself; 'the fact is, Falcon had such a time of it when he was in the Guards that it has taken all his life to forget it.'

'What a quiet fellow he's become. Wasn't there some difficulty about money-matters, with some of the Jews? Some mystery. He went abroad, and Hawkestone settled for him;' and Major Stapleton wondered whether anybody would settle for *him* if he came to grief over the second spring meeting.

'Yes, but Falcon found the money. I've heard Hawkestone say so many times. He put it beyond all dispute, and took good care to do so. There were so many stories afloat at the time, and it was so much talked about, that he made a point of contradicting anything like a suspicion of having helped him.'

'The man that ruined him you don't recollect, a man called Jansen,' said Major Stapleton.

'On the contrary, my dear Stapleton, Harold Falcon told me that Jansen saved him by finding a huge quantity of money at a moment's notice, I believe when poor Cranstone shot himself.'

'And heavily he paid for it by a post-obit on all the property he was to inherit from some old aunt. It cost him about five hundred per cent.'

'Not exactly, as he certainly lives on part of it now. The most I ever heard him say about the matter was that it cost him dear.'

‘What was he doing at Littletop’s to-day?’ inquired Major Stapleton after a pause during which he plunged into the *Sporting Gazette*.

‘Most probably on business for Lord Falconberg about his cousin’s horses. There’s the Hawk, the horse that ran so well in the criterion, beaten by half a length, and two or three more,’ replied Lord Belleisle; who, if he didn’t know everything, was at least better up in Harold’s affairs than Major Stapleton.

‘I remember him, a nice horse, very. I’m off by this train, so good-bye.’

And in it he had Harold Falcon for his companion, as well as Mr. Shanker. They both recollected when there was no train to Newmarket, and when few of Mr. Shanker’s class had ever been admitted into their society. It’s wonderful how poverty and wealth assimilate in making us acquainted with strange bed-fellows.





CHAPTER XXXVII.

A STUDIO.

MR. MCGILP lived in Newman Street, a dark dingy-looking street, yet not unfamiliar with Art. Art has its mysteries, and perhaps Newman Street is better acquainted with Art's mysteries than with Art itself. To a house therefore in this street, at this time, anyone in search of that peculiar knowledge, or of George Fellowes, or of Mr. McGilp, was likely to go. Harold Falcon was no patron of high art, nor of the dark and mysterious gentlemen connected with it, as in its infancy; nor did he care about Mr. McGilp; but he found himself on the step of that great impostor's door a day or two after his return from Newmarket.

I suppose hundreds of artists and artists' homes have been described from Gandish and his pupils downwards. I say downwards, because modern literature finds itself incapable of going upwards from Thackeray. There is amongst writers a conventional pattern for these sorts of characters pretty much alike, with just a difference in type, — German, Italian, English. All long-haired, bearded, moustachioed; one red, the other black, the third brown. All dirty, eccentric, preternaturally solemn; or jovial, beer-drinking, pipe-smoking, unkempt, uncorncd; getting their meals in a curious family-hog-tub fashion; reconcilable only with a total forgetfulness of the decencies of plates, knives, forks, or table-cloths.

Then the writer begins to think he has gone a little too

far ; but not liking to spoil the strong light and shade of the picture he has drawn, he proceeds to put on a varnish of sentimental virtue quite coincident with ethical turpitude. They don't pay their bills, these devil-may-care dogs, but they are always ready to help a sick friend. They are not remarkable for the social duties of husbands or fathers to their own wives and children, but they have a fund of affection to bestow upon the wives and children of other people, so that only they be good-looking. There are a great many dear Bessies left sitting at home, to the enjoyment of a lip-worship which they never hear, while dear Tom eats and drinks with nearer neighbours the gains that would be so acceptable at home. There is no denying great licence to high art of every kind. Genius must have its fling.

‘Pictoribus atque Poetis
Quidlibet audendi semper fuit æqua potestas.’

Possibly Horace did not mean exactly what I do, but he was very near the mark ; and the gentleman poet of the Augustan age regarded metaphorical diet and eccentricity in much the same light.

When Harold Falcon reached Mr. McGilp's academy he was shown up stairs,—stairs, whose balustrades wound in and out with a line of beauty beyond Belgravian graces. Dainty curves and flowing lines led to a wide landing, on whose walls were Bacchanalian boys and wreaths, with fruits and flowers, choice specimens of the architectural beauties of William and Mary or Anne's reigns. Dust and dirt disfigured them, and here and there a limb was wanting in the bas-relief of plaster or composition ; but the eye dwelt with pleasure upon ornament that accorded well with the refinements of its literature, but checked its severity. McGilp himself threw his simplicity into the balance. There he stood, mahl-stick in hand, under the barest of polls, closely shorn, his wig thrust into an old tweed shooting-jacket pocket, shouting to a slipshod wench to ‘show the gentleman up,’ and himself prepared to usher the stranger into his academy.

Harold introduced himself to the little painter, and

followed the indications of a well-prepared palette. His steps were arrested on the very threshold by a wonderful canvas covered all over with dabs of every colour of the rainbow, and some negative tints which had never appeared in any rainbow at all. It was attractive enough to an unpractised eye.

'Ah! Captain Falcon, you'll be looking at our Turner.'

'A Turner!' said Harold in surprise.

'Weel, it's just a Turner that we've been making amongst us,' replied the practical man of the easel. 'It's a wee bit canvas that the boys tak' to cleaning their palettes as they go out, and we've just christened it a Turner. It's a gude enough specimen o' the great colourist, or will be sae in a week or twa.' To which explanation Harold replied with a laugh which scarcely expressed as much humour as the twinkle of Mr. McGilp's eye. The occupants of the room made up for the master's unconventional appearance. Half-a-dozen pupils were sedulously at work, copying from the originals, or *quasi* originals, upon the walls, while in the centre was Mr. McGilp's own master-piece, a battle, whose white horses, scarlet coats, and cocked hats, clearly had reference to nothing later than Marlborough, and Blenheim, and Ramilies. On the walls were pinned divers sketches in chalk or crayons of torsos and busts, Centaurs and Lapithæ, antiques, and a continuation of the staircase in many colours. The Dutch school, too, was predominant among the youngsters. Scraps, too, of Wilkie caught the eye: while the more adventurous had made sketches of faces which English art engrafts on English experience. Why are we a great nation of portrait painters? Because we have originals of such beauty as no other country under the sun produces. Copies from Sir Godfrey Kneller, Gainsborough, and the playful childhood of Sir Joshua stood on easels or chairs, in a chaos that contrasted curiously with the unpoetical master who presided over the whole.

But the types of another school were there. The velvets and the hands of Vandyke, and the slouched hat and obtrusive colours of a Rubens were among the art pupils. There was the smell of the meerschaum, and the half-emptied pewter, without which beauty of form will not

properly flourish, at least within the walls of a painter's studio. A draped model, and a suit of Milanese armour, shared the lower end of the room between them.

'Mr. Fellowes? that's his unfinished sketch of a Bacchanal, ye'll see, and it's likely to be unfinished, if he's not more diligent than he has been lately. Not that he wants talent, Captain Falcon; but there's no stability of purpose to make a great artist. It's just here to-day, and Sir Samuel to-morrow.'

'Sir Samuel, Mr. McGilp? do you mean Sir Samuel Cripplegate?'

'Ay, it's like enough. He tells me he's a great patron o' the arts; but I aye tell him it's the Breetish public's the best patron o' merit. It's better to show your work to a whole nation than to any one man. And though I'll say naething against a gude dinner once and again, a full stomach aye makes an empty cupboard, Captain Falcon.' The captain might have been of Mr. McGilp's opinion too, but he said nothing for a minute or two: and after ascertaining that George Fellowes was a great deal more at Sir Samuel Cripplegate's than with the hard-working little painter in Newman Street, Harold Falcon took his leave.

The captain's reflections as he walked up Oxford Street were simple enough, and possibly borne out by the facts of the case; and while he sauntered down to the clubs, to read the papers and talk over the chances of the Two Thousand, and the late season's sport in the shires, we must adjourn to some chambers in the Temple, to visit his Cousin George, whom we have scarcely seen or heard of since he left Oxford.

George Falcon was much changed; changed, not as men change with years, by his beard, or his hair, or his wrinkles, but changed altogether. To say that he had had an anxious time of it is not true. His anxieties must have been his own, and were at least independent of his public career. In that he had succeeded; for, as his inclination had pointed only to the acquisition of money, and he had always made a thousand a-year more than he liked to spend, his wish was gratified. As a young man he had been devoid of ambition; but he had been clever and industrious in his way, humorous, and a good com-

panion at times ; and certainly smart-looking and well got up. Intensely selfish he always was, and he worked his friends in the manner to procure his own enjoyment at as little cost as possible. Not an amiable or respectable character, you will say. No ; but there were plenty who liked him, for all that ; and who took the gilt without looking at the quality of the gingerbread which it concealed.

In his profession, the law, he was just the man to succeed to a certain point ; and he had worked hard, not to the gallery, but for substantial profits. He numbered amongst his friends a large number of solicitors and attorneys, and neglected nothing that could bring grist to the mill. He knew that keeping up his own connections would be a waste of time and money, while the making of new ones would be precisely the reverse. Of Harold and Lord Falconberg, therefore, he saw but little, perhaps to the great regret of neither. The former was not so imbued with parental charity as to take much trouble about him ; the latter had offered him many civilities and much hospitality, till even his *bonhomie* was reduced to a formal dinner or two during the season.

So much was he changed since he dressed himself to go courting Peggy Jansen at Woodstock, that it would have been impossible to have recognised the smart, well-made figure of former days, in the careless, almost dirty costume in which we now discover him, up three flights of stairs in Pump Court. There are men who, to the end of their days, retain just that amount of dandyism which shows their appreciation of good dressing to have been always the effect of a liberal and good cause : dependent neither on youth, nor money, nor love for self, nor even for one other person—but part of their nature, like any other virtue, and as necessary in a primeval forest as in the High Street, Oxford, or Rotten Row. This cause we call self-respect : and George Falcon had none of it. This is why he became a sloven as well as a misanthrope, when he took to money-making.

But others said there was a cause for all this : that it was not all law, nor all avarice. He had a secret sorrow, like his Cousin Harold—I can say this : he bore it very differently. While every eye was looking at the ex-Guards-

man, as he walked down St. James's Street, and men and women said, What a handsome fellow that Captain Falcon is—he's fit to supply Hawkestone's place, when the old earl goes; George lounged in a small and dusty chamber, up three flights of rickety stairs. His old dressing-gown covered a loose and shabby pair of trowsers, whose pockets were torn and worn at the corners with frequent use, forensically and pecuniarily. For nothing gives so commanding an air to impromptu eloquence as a hand in the pocket, ready for use as occasion shall direct.

How changed in shape and nature from those boots and trowsers in which we have once before beheld him! Surely the strike among the tailors must have begun earlier than I imagined: and, to look at his misshapen high-lows, must have extended itself to the boot-makers too! Be that as it may, there he sat, smoking a dingy old pipe, with unkempt locks, ever and anon making-extracts from a black-letter book that lay on the table beside him.

He had just closed the mysterious volume from which he had been reading and writing, and was refreshing himself with a turn in some such light author as Wheaton's International Law, to see what prospect there might be of war with our transatlantic brothers, when a knock at his door startled him sufficiently to attract his attention. 'Come in,' said he—hoping an attorney; and he was right.

The attorney who entered was one Mr. Dryden, a man of large and good practice. Not more honest than others, nor a greater rogue. But he was penetrating and shrewd,—and as he was said to know a thing or two that he ought not to have known, men sometimes said he was a rascal. But as he never was known to divulge his knowledge excepting for very handsome considerations, he was quite as prudent as, and not much worse than, the rest of the world. At present he unfolded his business in a very satisfactory manner, and without much circumlocution.

'George Falcon, give me half-an-hour's chat, if you can spare the time,' and the lawyer laid his hat on one side and brushed up some iron-gray stubborn-looking hair with his hand. He was a fine, tall, and very handsome

man, with nothing astute about his appearance. He had a disagreeable expression sometimes about his mouth, which he drew down at the corners when not quite satisfied. 'I can spare the time, Dryden, if there's anything like business to be done—if not, I'll come and dine with you some day, soon.'

Mr. Dryden's mouth went down at the corners ; but he smiled notwithstanding.

'You can't dine with me, as I am about to leave town ; and it depends entirely upon circumstances what is to be got out of the business.' The lawyer knew his friend's weakness.

'Am I interested personally or likely to be so ?'

'That depends also upon how far your sympathies extend beyond yourself.'

George Falcon laughed. 'My sympathies are like yours, Dryden, I expect, and those of other people :—for yourself first, for others if there's anything to be got out of them collaterally ; and not averse to do a good action in preference to a bad one, when the risk or profit is nil or equal.'

'Is that the world you live in, or a creed you've adopted for convenience ?'

'It's a creed I've adopted to conceal my real affection for the world I live in.'

'It's used you well, Falcon, at all events,' said Mr. Dryden with some sincerity.

'Has it ? that's a matter of opinion, my good friend. You have : but every man knows his own troubles best. Now let's have your story—what do you want ?'

Mr. Dryden looked at him with his peculiar sneer, almost imperceptible, and inquired in a dry tone, whether he knew his Cousin Harold the captain.

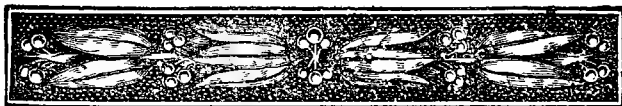
'Yes, I do ; but that doesn't interest me. I remember when he used to borrow money of me.' Here he stretched himself out in his chair, and putting both hands into his old pockets prepared to listen as though he might be taken at a disadvantage again.

'He's not likely to do so any more ; though, I take it, he's borrowed a great deal more since, than you'll ever be willing to lend him. It wasn't to help him to do that that I came here. I want to tell you something about

him, which you ought to know, though I doubt you won't give much for the intelligence ; but I shall not ask for anything, so be comforted. All this was said with much gravity, but a tone of banter, and George Falcon replied in the same indolent voice,—

‘Then, as it costs nothing, let's hear it,’—and he heard it, in the next chapter.





CHAPTER XXXVIII.

RATHER IMPORTANT.

GEORGE FALCON threw himself back in his easy-chair, after refilling an old pipe, and lighting it, with all the indifference of a man who never expected to hear much to his own advantage, except from his own efforts ; while Dryden, the older man of the two, sat bolt upright, with an air as of one conscious of having something to communicate, and much in accordance with his personal appearance.

‘You don’t object to smoke?’ said Falcon.

‘Not in other people’s houses,’ replied the solicitor, who for a solicitor treated the barrister, for a barrister, with very little respect.

‘Ah ! I forgot, there’s a Mrs. Dryden, it is easy to see.’

‘And it’s easy to see there’s no Mrs. Falcon,’ replied Dryden, cheerfully ; at which remark, one which, by-the-bye, he must have heard some hundreds of times, George Falcon looked rather foolish, and went on with his pipe.

‘You knew your Cousin Harold very well formerly, didn’t you, Falcon—I mean years ago, when he was in the Guards?’

‘Very ; he was intimate enough with me to borrow money so you can imagine how well we knew one another.’

‘And he always repaid it?’ inquired Mr. Dryden.

‘Undoubtedly :’—here Falcon sat upright for a minute, but finding nothing come of this question he relapsed again.

‘Then you’ve nothing to complain of; and ought to like him.’

‘Nothing, whatever, and I do like him; that is, as well as I like any of my relations. He has the character of being a good fellow.’

‘Which means a very improvident one. He was fast.’

‘Very. Faster than this cock-and-bull story which I’m waiting for by a great many degrees. You haven’t a stop watch in your pocket, have you?’

‘No; why?’ inquired the solicitor, rather solemnly.

‘Because I thought you had, and that it affected your speech.’

‘Nonsense. Tell me what Harold Falcon did.’

‘Ask what he didn’t do. Played, raced, hunted, lived with——’

‘As men usually do, you would say.’

‘Indeed I was not going to say anything of the sort. I was going to say, with the fastest men in town; at Newmarket, or at Crocky’s, or at Melton, as regularly as codfish, salmon, or turbot were to be seen upon a table.’

‘And there was no question of—well—of a lady in the case.’

Again George Falcon raised himself, apparently endeavouring to collect something to his cousin’s disadvantage; but in a minute or two he replied, ‘None whatever. It’s common enough cause of ruin, I know, Dryden: particularly with good-looking fellows like Harold and yourself: but he came to grief entirely from gambling. I don’t think his personal extravagance had much to do with it, though he was as indifferent about money as I am about cock-fighting,’ with which simile George Falcon relapsed again.

‘Didn’t he go abroad, or live abroad, a great deal?’

‘Not till Lord Cranstone’s death obliged him. He owed him a few thousands more than either could have paid; and instead of going to Tattersall’s to settle, he settled at home by shooting himself.’

‘Then do you mean to say that Captain Falcon was a defaulter?’

‘Not a bit of it; he’s not at all the sort of fellow. He’d rather have followed Cranstone, though he couldn’t

have got the money out of him. He borrowed the money, Heaven knows how! from a man called Jansen, and my cousin, Lord Hawkestone, settled his book. I remember it as well as if it was yesterday.'

'Did you say Jansen? It's a singular name. You knew him I suppose?'

'Not exactly. It's a singular name; it's Dutch.'

'Or German?'

'No; Dutch, I tell you.' And either from temper at the contradiction, which was very unlike him, or some other cause unknown to Dryden, George Falcon blushed deeply, and busied himself on his pipe. 'I knew him well by name, and have often heard him spoken of by those who knew him better.'

'Did you ever hear that he had a daughter?'

Notwithstanding his apparent indifference, George Falcon could not help sitting up now, and saying with some irritation,

'What the devil can you want to know about his daughter? What can it signify to you or to me?'

The corners of Mr. Dryden's mouth went down considerably as he said, 'I don't know about me, but it may signify to you. Your Cousin Harold is the heir to the old earl.'

'I know it. Marvellous luck, wasn't it?'

'And you are the next to him,' said the lawyer, disregarding the interruption.

'I haven't forgotten it. I wonder what it's worth in a life-insurance office?'

'Did Harold Falcon ever go to Nuremberg?'

'How can I possibly tell that now?' and George seemed to have recovered his carelessness of the whole affair.

'Do you know that he did not?' said Dryden, who got more eager every minute.

'I know nothing about it,' said old Surly, as he was occasionally called by old chums who had known him in his university days.

'Then I'll enlighten you,' said the other.

'Do so, and be quick about it, for I've a consultation at midnight, and it seems to me your story will last till then or beyond it.'

‘Captain Falcon went to Nuremberg with Jansen’s daughter, and married her.’

Mr. George began to think it did affect him. He looked so astonished that he found no breath to make any remark on the subject for a few minutes. At last he found a tongue, and it prompted him instinctively. ‘Has he any family—a son and heir?’ This was spoken with some degree of banter, for he certainly didn’t believe the story.

‘It’s said that he has; at least, a son born after his marriage, and therefore legally his, and consequently heir to the title.’

George Falcon was wide enough awake now; and the revelation was sufficiently startling, it must be admitted. He sat for a minute or two. His face had lost the careless expression that it had assumed, and with some difficulty maintained. He laid his pipe upon the table, and said at length, ‘And you know all this, Dryden? As I am an interested party, perhaps you will tell me how?’

‘Certainly, if you think the subject sufficiently important to pursue. I had occasion to go to Nuremberg—not on any business connected with your family—but to ascertain a fact relative to another client, by which I obtained access to the archives of the old city.’

‘More lucrative than interesting,’ said George Falcon, thinking he ought to say something.

‘That’s as may be. In the present case, perhaps, it was so. In looking over them it was necessary to refer to some old marriage registers, which, it seems, after a certain date, it is customary to send there for security. You know that the connection I have formed with your family is sufficiently close to warrant some surprise in seeing that name so far from England and under such peculiar circumstances. I therefore asked permission to look at the document in question. We lawyers have a sort of freemasonry all over the world, and my conductor, an *avocat*, who guarded these sacred treasures, not only allowed me to inspect the name more closely, but as it was written in German, he did me the still greater favour of translating it. I have copied it, and the translation was the registration of the marriage itself.’

During this very intelligible narrative, it is not too

much to say that the auditor's face assumed two or three different colours and forms of expression. As soon as his surprise had somewhat subsided, incredulity followed, and a rather pale sort of smile, so to speak, lit up, or rather threw its shadow over, the barrister's countenance. This expression gave place to one of meditation, and then a frown or two wrinkled his forehead, and brought back its natural colour with his natural occupation. The only sign of a nervousness which was really considerable, was observable in the demolition of a quill pen which he took from the table. By the time Dryden had reached this point of his story all the feathers were stripped off, and the quill uselessly split up in every direction.

'Do you mean that you obtained a copy of that document from an intelligent and trustworthy person?'

'He was intelligent enough, I have said, to be an *avocat*; and those German lawyers are not without brains or education. I know nothing of their honesty; but they must equal our own in that respect. Herr Krümmacher was trustworthy enough to be placed in a somewhat responsible official situation.'

'Have you been long in possession of this family mystery?'

'Some little time; as I had to finish my researches in Nuremberg, and only returned to England the day before yesterday.'

'And is this *fact*,' and George Falcon laid some stress upon the word, 'known to Lord Falconberg?'

'Ah, that I can't tell. Certainly it ought to be;'

Dryden paused: 'but——'

'Yes, it ought to be. If you're convinced, why hesitate?' and George Falcon spoke as if, though the earl couldn't direct the title or estates in favour of the next of kin after Harold, at least he might make a different disposition of the money, which report asserted he had at his own disposal.

'Because if he knows it already, which you see is quite possible, I should say, from your cousin's character, even probable, I shall be in the position of the gentleman who had found a mare's nest, and if not I should certainly not like to be the one to tell him of it.' He

didn't think that the duty would devolve upon him, and would prove more disagreeable than he imagined.

'And did you make any further confirmatory inquiries?' said George Falcon, who was seriously impressed by the lawyer's manifest conviction.

'A few, very confirmatory they were. I saw the clergyman who performed the ceremony, and found that unless there were two Harold Falcons your cousin was undoubtedly married some twenty years ago, with the rites and ceremonies belonging to the German Protestant Church. As to Jansen's daughter, there's no doubt about the lady, who has relations in Nuremberg, where she was born. The pasteur, who has an eye for female beauty, gave a glowing description of her charms.'

'And is he as intelligent and trustworthy as the *avocat* ?'

'He's not above sixty years of age now, in full possession of his faculties.'

'Of which his memory is not perhaps the least extraordinary.'

'Well, I should think so, for he added some particulars with which report had made him familiar,' replied Mr. Dryden, by no means put out by the peculiarity of George Falcon's method of cross-examination.

'About the son and heir to the Falconberg estates, I suppose?'

'About the son and heir undoubtedly, if what he said was true, and that is capable of proof or refutation. Thus far I may tell you, that there is irrefutable evidence that although these two people are said never to have lived together, but to have parted almost at the church door, a son was born to Mr. Harold Falcon some few months after marriage, which your cousin may repudiate, but which the law will assign to him as the heir to his future title and estates, the future Earl of Falconberg, in the natural course of things.'

'And you believe all that?'

'I do.'

'I don't,' said the other. 'Do you suppose these people would have allowed Harold to live thus long without pursuing their claim upon him? Do you know friend Jansen or his daughter? What! after the death of

Lord Hawkestone, heir to an earl with about thirty thousand a-year: shame, say you? Do you know of any shame that isn't covered by a title and such a position? If he'd been bred on a dunghill, my good fellow, there's not a man or woman of their boasted ten thousand who wouldn't welcome him and her too if there was anything to be got by it. Shame! bless your guileless heart, Dryden,—there's no shame in the world but poverty. What do you suppose I've been struggling for all my life?'

'Oh, you fellows live up three flights of stairs and think you see the world in a court of law. You know a little of the worst side of it. At all events, these people, Jansen and his daughter, have allowed Captain Falcon to live without molestation up to this time; nor is it at all clear that they have the least idea who he is. At the time of this supposed marriage he was worse than poor, for he owed a great deal of money. Jansen himself must have known that as well as most people, for he borrowed a great deal from him to pay his gambling debts. Now if his cousins were not dead, there were four young lives between him and the title. It's excusable if a Dutch boor did forget to ascertain his exact status in society, or his chances of a coronet.'

'The shortest-sighted people are long enough sighted when their own interest is concerned.'

'As a general proposition I agree with you. But as long-sighted people in the dark are no better off than the blind—scarcely so well—and as I really think they were in the dark as to Captain Falcon's position, I retain my opinion.' The truth is, Dryden had very good reason for his opinion, or he would not have given it.

'Now tell me, Dryden, what was your particular object in this disclosure?'

'Well, I will. I've had very little communication with Captain Falcon for some years past. He has acted as your uncle's agent, and has usually sought for advice elsewhere. We've had no quarrel, but we've had little intercourse. I had no wish, nor indeed any business, to carry this intelligence to Lord Falconberg; and I don't know that I should do him a service were I to tell him. I've brought it to you. Make the most of it.'

And the lawyer for the first time during the conversation sat back in his arm-chair and folded his hands in comfort, not in slumber.

‘The way for me to make the most of it is to make the least of it. It can be no advantage to me to find out that there’s one more life, and that a young and possibly a good one, between me and the title. Besides, I may marry, what’s to prevent me?’ And it must be admitted that George Falcon’s colour rose so high at this point, and his voice was so defiant, as to make it probable that he meant to do so. At all events, the family lawyer thought it right to soothe him.

‘Nothing in the world; why not? Whether you have the estate or not, you need not, I presume, hesitate on the score of income.’

‘Or suppose I were married?’ he took no notice of his friend’s answer. ‘I don’t want to bring home to Hawkestone Castle an almost insurmountable obstacle to my succession.’

As Dryden stared, somewhat astonished at what sounded like an admission, he said nothing. ‘I think it’s just as likely that I should have been clandestinely married as Harold.’

‘Just as possible, you mean. But as we’ve no proof, you see——’

‘Well, there are no proofs as yet of the other,’ said George Falcon abruptly; ‘when there are it will be time enough for us to talk about an heir to the Falconberg property; just now it strikes me as premature to canvass the matter. The thing’s safe with me, and I think might remain so with you. On second thoughts, I should say nothing about it.’ Shortly after which the lawyer made his way once more down those dirty, rickety, narrow stairs, almost at the risk of his neck.

Mr. Dryden was scarcely beyond the precincts of the Temple before an extraordinary change had taken place in the conduct of his late companion.

George Falcon rose, looked at himself in the glass, pushed his hair off his forehead, and seemed tolerably well satisfied with the scrutiny. He saw no material change in his appearance. His colour was never high, his eye seldom bright, but it was no less so than usual.

Then he proceeded to fill another pipe, and having done so, he walked into his dressing-room, and plunged his face and head into cold water. Returning, he lighted his pipe, and smoking violently, he paced his apartment with quick steps to and fro till his pipe was out. Upon which he resumed his seat.

During that time he had gone twenty years back. He had become suddenly twenty years younger. He was again an undergraduate; he had Beauchamp and his other friends with him. He saw Harold as he was—bold, generous, reckless about money, indifferent to censure or praise; likely to sacrifice himself for a woman; not incapable of dragging down his family, or anybody else, for his gratification. He saw himself, too, better than he was now; impulsive, poetical as far as women were concerned; hard and practical in money matters, because he was then clever enough to estimate its real value—the value which the market, the world, set upon it. He was again at Woodstock with Margaret Jansen; and he appreciated her beauty and her attractions to himself at the estimation in which he then held them. Then he got older again. He reviewed his position; his professional career; the steady, hard-working, profitable career he had so industriously, so successfully followed.

‘Now,’ said he to himself, ‘is this true—is he married? Well, possibly; not probably. Has he a son legally heir to his honours and his wealth? Margaret Jansen’s son! will he be Lord Falconberg’s heir? The presumption is that he must be, if Dryden’s story be true. If not, will not Harold marry elsewhere—his cousin, Lady Helen? Why not? and with a family, what would the insurance officers, or those reckless Jews, give for my chance of the succession?’ Verily, he had plenty to think about. In the meantime law was a certainty, whatever marriage and inheritance might be; so he set to work on a very dry case, and strove to interest himself in it, with very bad success. Then he jumped up again. ‘Where the deuce was this boy, if he existed? and what had become of the family of Jansen? What a fool he was to have forgotten to ask the question.’

Lawyer Dryden, too, was so engaged with his own thoughts that, on emerging from the Temple, he ran up

against the flourishing editor of a daily paper in Fleet Street, and was nearly run over at Temple Bar, before he collected his thoughts into any form whatever. They ended, however, before he reached the Strand, by assuming a shape somewhat of the following kind. 'I've not told him more than two-thirds of what I know; and, luckily, he never asked me. I know that the boy is in London at this time. I have traced the Jansens, and when I want the information have a fair opportunity of acquiring it. He knows nothing of Harold or of this affair. That's clear. Whether Lord Falconberg knows it, or ought to know it, is another question. That will keep. I don't want to bell the cat myself.' When he reached his chambers a client was waiting for him. Sir Samuel Cripplegate was in his room.





CHAPTER XXXIX.

LORD FALCONBERG'S HEIR.

SIR SAMUEL CRIPPLEGATE was in great form. From head to foot he was smart, brisk, cheerful. Thoroughly well got up, in a fashion as much approaching the country gentleman as his preconceived notion of the character permitted. And considering the disadvantages under which he laboured, it was far from bad. His hat had acquired an additional nail's breadth in the brim; his hair was closely clipped all round, and stood on end after the fashion of a wire-haired terrier; his whiskers were the same, and were elaborately cut evenly in line with his collars. His whole countenance had a look of the water-brush, and he was manifestly in prime good humour with himself and everybody else. It was this Quixotic notion of finding a sympathiser in his contentment, which sent him on a visit to his friend and adviser, Lawyer Dryden. Lady Cripple-gate was scarcely the person to enter into Sir Samuel's present pleasurable state of excitement; and as to Isabella—well, she would have done so; for she had a great deal more of her father about her than of her mother; but it happened that she hadn't been offered the opportunity.

'Ah! Sir Samuel; you here?' and Mr. Dryden hung his hat upon a peg on the wall of his antechamber, and walked into the inner room of his very comfortable chambers in Regent Street.

'Well, yes; we've just come up to town for a week or

two: and as my missus—lady, I should say—and Miss Isabella have taken themselves off, I'm come to have ten minutes' chat,' saying which Sir Samuel rubbed his hands, and entered eagerly upon Consols, reform, the City police, capital punishment, the tailors' strike, and half-a-dozen other subjects, with as much acumen as if he had pronounced all his aspirates, and had the education of George Falcon himself. The old gentleman was shrewd enough, and a communicative and pleasant companion when he descended from the high horse, which he liked riding since his elevation to what he was pleased to call the 'hupper ten thousand.'

'So you like your new property, Sir Samuel; plenty of society?'

'Yes, yes,' replied he, with more confidence than he could have done before the winter. 'Yes, yes; well enough for that—all pleasant and hamicable. Neighbourhood? ah! well, that's pretty good, I should say; wants a little drafting, as they say in the 'unting field.' And here Dryden opened his eyes to a new phase of his character. 'There's your City men; well, I'm one o' them myself, Dryden, so it won't do to speak ill o' them. Besides, they're well enough in their way; but there's one or two who's been in trade, who are in trade now, and my miss—lady'—he had scarcely managed to get over an inveterate habit of some twenty years in a few weeks—'won't have 'em at all. Between ourselves, Dryden, it's all d—d nonsense, you know. If a fellow has plenty of tin, and——'

'Education,' suggested Dryden, slowly and dryly, with a drawing down of the corners of his eloquent mouth.

'Education? lor, no; that's all moonshine. I meant to say brass;—he can do anything.' And the newly-made knight put his hand in his pocket, and turned over his loose silver with a cheerful and self-satisfied smile.

'I dare say the two together would put him on his mettle; but don't you think it wants some education?'

'Not a bit of it. I never had a hap'worth of education. I just went to a dame's school, between you and me and the post, where I learnt a little ciphering and writing, and came up to London, and went into business

in the City; and now I've got money, and titles, and education, and society, and everything. He might have quoted Horace upon the subject, had he known how. 'And I'll tell you how it's done. Take to fox-hunting my boy, and you may go into the society of any duke in the land.'

As Dryden knew something of some of the dukes of the land, and a great deal of Sir Samuel Cripplegate, he was obliged to accept this eccentric proposition with some exceptions. 'I'm glad you found it so.'

'Bless your soul, Sir, every house in the county open to me at once. 'Unting's the 'inge to 'ang your gate on, you may depend, Dryden. When I first went to Egmont nobody—nobody of any consequence called. Of course, your butchers, and bakers, and candlestick-makers, they left their cards fast enough; but my lady wasn't going to stand that, you know, though I think it's the duty of the squire of the place to keep up a friendly feeling in the village. Well, this wouldn't do, at any price, and we couldn't make it out. Some called, to be sure, and asked us once to dinner; but they wouldn't come to us.'

'How disinterested society must be in your neighbourhood, Sir Samuel.'

'I don't know about that. I think they wanted something when they asked us to dine with them. By some mistake or other, just because I wanted pheasants, my keeper goes and kills foxes.'

'Ah! that's rather an awkward mistake to make in —shire,' said the lawyer.

'So it is; but my doctor's a capital fellow—first-rate, I can tell you—lives at a very pretty place, and has put by a good bit o' money. Well, he's one o' your fox-hunting doctors; and we got talking about the neighbourhood, and says he to me, "If I was you I'd go to the meeting next Thursday." "What meeting?" says I. "The county 'ounds," says he. "Everybody'd like to see you there, and I'll put it all right. Do the thing that's right—preserve the foxes—and give 'em a hundred pounds, and d—m-me, Sir Samuel, you'll have your house as full of dukes in a month as the hounds is full o' ticks.'"

'Your doctor's a man of the world—a clever man, Sir Samuel, take my word for it.'

‘By Jove, Sir, he was right. I went to the meeting, I promised to preserve the foxes, I put my name down for two hundred pounds, and lor’ bless you, I know all the nobbs, and the nobbs know me—and if I wanted to start for the county to-morrow——’

‘You’d have to take the hounds and keep ’em,’ said Dryden, laughing.

‘Well, I shaln’t do that; but I told ’em they were welcome to the use of my dog Snap: and I’d bring him with me to join the hunt the first time they came my way next season.’ The lawyer, who knew something of hunting as well as of dukes, sat with a wonderful stare on his countenance, and then looked as if he were choking. ‘They laughed at this, and seemed to enjoy it amazingly. He’s an uncommon good dog, I can tell you; for when the keeper caught Master Renard in a trap in one of my covers, Snap went in at him like a bull-dog, and nearly killed him single-handed.’

‘You didn’t mention this at the meeting?’ said Dryden, somewhat alarmed.

‘No: I didn’t say anything about that.’

‘It’s as well not to; or some of the dukes you mention mightn’t like to come to a house where so savage an animal was kept. I should keep that dark. Did you go out yourself, before the close of the season?’ inquired the lawyer again, almost in convulsions.

‘No, I didn’t. But I sent out young George Fellowes on one of the carriage horses, and we weren’t able to drive him again for about ten days. Ah! you must come and see young Fellowes. He’s an uncommon clever young fellow; one of the most intelligent hartists I ever met with.’

‘And where did you pick him up, Sir Samuel?’

‘To tell you the truth, I don’t know much about him. Now, you know everyone; and I dare say, Dryden, you wouldn’t mind finding out what you can about this young man for me.’

‘What clue can you give me? Tell me all you know.’ Dryden was very willing to serve Sir Samuel, not only because he was a good client, but because he owed him something, for a good turn or two that Sir Samuel had done him in the way of City business. Dryden was not

a rich man, and a little City gambling helped him to support a rather large and extravagant family.

'He's a friend of Lord Falconberg's: I met him there.' This was a good strong assertion, very wide of the truth; but the name served Sir Samuel's purpose rather better even than he expected, for Dryden felt an interest in the business at once, quite independent of the rank of the gentleman mentioned.

'Lord Falconberg's?'

'That is, of Captain Falcon's—he's a house in our village.'

'And what's the name?'

'George Fellowes. He's a hartist, as I said before: and he's been a great deal at the 'All. He paints in Bella's album, and he's made some beautiful sketches for me. They'll be worth money some o' these days. Lord Hawkestone brought him over from Germany, and since his death Captain Falcon's taken to patronising him. Now he's away, and let his house, and he's often down with us from Saturday till Monday. But you see, we don't know much about him; and as Bella and he are much of an age, though they're both of 'em young enough——'

'Just so. I see, perfectly. You'd like to ascertain who this young man is—naturally—before you give him too much encouragement. You're a wise man, Sir Samuel. There's a great deal of unintentional mischief done before one knows anything about it. Now, is that literally all you know about this George ——, what did you say?'

'Fellowes—George Fellowes,' and Sir Samuel took up his hat and proceeded to take leave, when the lawyer once more stopped him.

'By-the-way, you had better give me his address in London.'

'His address—I really—now, that's absurd enough. I don't know his address, but it can easily be found. He's with McGilp as a pupil.'

'What, McGilp the artist? Oh, then, I'll see about it for you. I dare say we shall soon be able to satisfy your doubts.' And, to tell the truth, the lawyer had some doubts of his own, though very few, which he

meant satisfying at the same time. Just then the door opened again, and Sir Samuel put in a rosy, but mysterious face at the door. 'And, Dryden, my good fellow not a word to Lady Cripplegate about the meeting, and the two hundred pound subscription, on any account.'

Not very long after Mr. Dryden called upon McGilp. Whether the normal condition of Mr. McGilp was to stand at the top of his staircase flourishing his mahlstick and without his wig, or whether the increasing heat of the weather impelled him to that condition, I cannot tell; but he was discovered by Dryden in precisely the same state as he had been found by Captain Falcon some little time before.

Dryden's time being valuable, he lost none of it in telling the bald-headed little Scotchman that he should be glad for a few minutes' conversation with him on a matter of business.

McGilp's idea of business was painting. It did not go much beyond *chiaro-oscuro*, high lights, shades, scumbling, glazing, and such matters. He paid his rent pretty regularly, and looked sharp after his pupils' salaries, but he didn't exactly know how he got into his house; and as to water-rates, poor's-rates, paving and lighting, he was as much in the dark as if he had been asked to define a compound householder. When, therefore, Mr. Dryden spoke of business McGilp ushered him straight into the painting-room. He had the great advantage of seeing the Turner in an advanced stage of colouring; the same half-emptied pot of porter, and the remains of the mutton-chops, early dinners of the velvet-coated, love-locked young artists, who thronged the room. McGilp could not conceive of cleanliness and genius under the same exterior.

It was needful that Mr. Dryden should explain the nature of his communication, as requiring a greater amount of privacy than he met with among the Vandykes, Cuyyps, Holbeins, broken victuals, and damaged models of this rough-and-ready school: and he said so. The consequence was that he was accommodated with a rickety chair in a bed-room, the great master, follower and fellow-countryman of David Wilkie, taking his seat on a truckle

bedstead in the same room. If the truth must be told, Mrs. McGilp was ironing her husband's shirts in the only unoccupied room belonging to the family.

'Now, Mr. McGilp,' said the lawyer, with as unconcerned a face and manner as he could assume, 'I think you have a pupil, a young gentleman by the name of Fellowes—George Fellowes.' Mr. McGilp assented.

'A very promising young man, I'm told.'

'It's vera easy to promise: and I'm thinking he'll find it easier than to perform.'

'Ah! I had heard from some friends of mine that he had much talent.'

'The chiel's well enough, if they'd let 'em alone; but he's been under my tuition long enough to be better. He's ower-much sought after of fine folk.'

'That's bad. I think he came to you from abroad?'

'Well, he just came from Egmont, from some great laird. The captain's been to see him here; but he's mair friends than brains, I'm thinking.' This was not quite the point at which Dryden wished to arrive, so he put the next question in unmistakable language.

'I mean he came from abroad to pursue his studies in art in this country?'

'Then he came to do what he'd better begin to do soon, for he hasn't commenced yet,' replied McGilp; and as Dryden was one of those men who persuaded himself that every man desired to deceive unless he had some palpable motive for speaking the truth, he set down McGilp's touch of national humour to over-caution. For a few moments he was at a loss how to proceed. At length, he said,

'I suppose, as he came from Germany, he brought with him something of the mannerism of the German or Dutch school?'

Dryden had not the slightest idea of the subject on which he was talking; but he felt obliged to say something, and it certainly was an ingenious mode of introducing Germany.

'Ech, Sir, there's a wide difference between the twa schools, I'm thinking,' said McGilp, plunging at once, *con amore*, into the painting part of the question, without any reference to the other and only important part of it, in

Dryden's estimation; 'and as to any knowledge he brought with him, he's kept it to himself.' From which point the Scotch painter fell foul, first of the German, then of the Dutch, and lastly of his own school, declaring that the only thing that the English had ever painted decently were landscapes and portraits; and that good historical pictures or animals were only to be met with in exceptional cases: ending, however, just as Dryden was drawing down the sides of his mouth in hopeless despair of getting in a word, by saying, 'And if he ever wants to learn the true principles of his art he'd better go back again to my old friend Bernhard Jansen, and get a little of his energy and taste.'

'Bernhard Jansen!' repeated Dryden, with well-assumed surprise, as if this was the first time such a name had ever been heard of. 'Ah! a great artist, is he?'

'He's just Maister Fellowes' grandfather. He was a vera old friend o' mine, and a vera imprudent one, always turning his hand to this thing or that; but he knew more about art than half of your Royal Academicians in this country or any other.'

'And where, may I ask, Mr. McGilp, is the residence of this gentleman, who deserves such high praise at your hands?'

'He was born in Amsterdam. He lived in Nuremberg, where he learnt the art of carving in wood. He came to London, where he was a picture-dealer, old curiosity manufacturer, money-lender, and swindler in general, and retired to the neighbourhood of Cleves, where he lives with his daughter. He sent his grandson to me; but for any good he's likely to do here he'd better have kept him at home.'

'You haven't formed a high opinion of the young man, then?'

'He's well enough to look at, and to speak to; but he's no taste for hard work. He's taken to writing for the booksellers, who don't pay him; and he's always wasting his time at Sir Samuel Somebody's at Egmont. He's a likely callant for a young lassie to fancy; but I never had time to fall in love when I was his age, so I just married a good woman that knew my ways weel.'

‘That’s difficult to find, Mr. McGilp, in all cases.’

‘Not in mine, Mr. Dryden; for I took my house-keeper, and we’ve been happy enough ever since. But I’m a practical man, though I’m fond o’ art.’

By this time, Mr. Dryden, having accomplished his purpose, took his hat, and having wished Mr. McGilp a good-morning, returned to his chambers.





CHAPTER XL.

HAROLD FALCON'S COMMUTATION OF PUNISHMENT.

SINCE Lord Hawkestone's death life at Hawkestone Castle had not materially altered. Lady Helen, as well as Lord Falconberg, were persons whose consideration for others, and especially for one another, was never overbalanced by considerations for self. The earl felt his remaining son's death most acutely. But he was one of those men whose equanimity, naturally or acquired, stole imperceptibly into his sorrow, and prevented the selfish exhibition of it, however severely he might be taxed. No external change was observable in his hospitality, beyond that which custom and decency demanded. Lady Helen, too, anxious to spare her father every reminiscence that could awaken his regrets, filled the house, if not with gay, with cheerful society from the county families, and those whom old ties made at such a time doubly acceptable. The Duke and Duchess of Poitiers, with their daughter, Lady Di, were welcomed guests, whenever they could be spared from London during the season. Older men, old friends of her father, who had shared his pleasure, and were now willing to alleviate his grief, continued to come and go; and Hawkestone Castle was not a gloomy house of mourning externally, whatever might be the real feelings which animated its inmates. Lord Falconberg was a fine old sportsman. He had not been able, or indeed inclined, to indulge his predilections during the winter in which his son had died; nor had he been seen much by his neigh-

hours in his former capacity, in which he had hitherto shone so conspicuously. Still the black coat in lieu of the scarlet had occasionally appeared at the cover-side, towards the end of the season : and the smile had not appeared less grateful to his tenants, nor his unaffected interest in their pursuits been less ready, for the loss he had sustained. But he was altered, very much altered ; and as the spring waned, and the summer went on, he did not recover that physical power of which he and his family had hitherto been so proud. The tall, erect, old man was bowed. Like the tree, he might be bending to the storm which was passing over it. Still he showed no sign of reaction ; and months ceased to do for him what those who knew him well had predicted would be the effect of weeks. He was equally kind, equally active, equally sympathetic, some said equally cheerful ; but Lady Helen and Harold Falcon who had been down several times, knew better. An old malady, too, which had so long lain dormant as to lull suspicion, showed itself upon one or two occasions. That malady was heart complaint. A tenant, in whom he had taken much interest, had failed, from over-speculation in corn. It was a case likely to give momentary uneasiness to anyone ; but Lord Falconberg had fainted upon the somewhat abrupt disclosure of the circumstances. He had been riding with Lady Helen when her horse had become less governable than usual ; and though he knew the courage of his daughter to have been equal to the occasion more than once, he had been affected in the same manner on their return home. A man of extraordinary stability hitherto, he had become nervous on little more than ordinary matters ; and the fresh colour which had distinguished him, and which was so remarkable a beauty with his white hair, seemed to fade imperceptibly. He had the same pleasure, and more than his usual animation, in exercise ; but it produced a painful and depressing effect upon him afterwards. Lord Falconberg was going down hill some people said ; it is to be feared not without cause.

One thing he would have. He would have Lady Helen write for her Cousin Harold ; and Harold always came at her summons. Now Lady Helen did not like writing for Harold Falcon so often. She put it upon her father,

but her conscience smote her ; her maidenly modesty revolted, for she liked Harold. Must the truth be told ? She loved Harold. She had always loved him ; more when he was poor and in debt, an Arab of the fashionable desert, than now, if possible, when he could buy, or at least bid for, the best wife that Fashion had to offer. She had often sighed, almost wept, over his delinquencies. She had watched his struggles with himself, and his inclinations, and worshipped him as a conqueror of more than many cities—a ruler of his own spirit.

It's not to be wondered at. Hawkestone, whom she loved, loved him. Her father, on whom she doted, doted on him. And Harold himself—there's no instinct so strong in a woman as that which tells her when and where she is loved. He had a secret sorrow. Was it poverty ? was it false pride, that refused to be beholden to a woman's wealth ? Once it might have been so ; it could be so no longer. It is quite true Harold Falcon did love his Cousin Helen, he had long loved her ; he had struggled against that less successfully than against his pitiful inclinations for extravagance and gambling. For circumstances were against him. When he would have withdrawn his foot from that dangerous threshold all things held him a prisoner. His uncle would have him. Hawkestone's health and affection restrained him. Now, when he would have left the country, he was cursed with an inheritance, with duties, with responsibilities, which dragged him nearer and nearer to that fatal happiness, the daily presence of his Cousin Helen.

By the autumn, when they should have gone to Scotland, Lord Falconberg was not seriously ill, but weak. 'Helen, my love,' and she came and laid hers upon his attenuated hand, on which the veins rose more fully than usual, 'I often look round here, and think what I would have given to have known my boy their master ; ah ! what a master he would have made, Nelly. And now I think my greatest happiness would be to know that you were likely to stand here their mistress, by the side of my successor. How odd we should all have loved him so, Nelly. Is it impossible that it can be ?'

Then Lady Helen bent down her beautiful face to her father's and scalding tears dropped from her eyes upon

his cheek. She saw how utterly she was misunderstood ; and yet not even to her father could she tell the truth. 'Ah, if Harold would but speak,' thought she. And when he came in he did speak affectionately as ever, but not the words she longed to hear.

'Helen, I shall not leave Hawkestone at present. I must help you to nurse your father. You look tired ; I'm glad I declined Belleisle's proposal to go to Paris.'

The young gentleman, in the meantime, about whom so many persons had been interesting themselves, had developed some traits of character since his first appearance in the previous autumn in Scotland. He had improved in a marked manner. He had cut his hair, and dismissed his velvet coat. He certainly cared less about the artistic effect which McGilp's pupils were fond of exhibiting on their own persons, than the generality of foreigners. Their *abandon* and diet and conventionalities disgusted him ; and nothing but a fear of his grandfather's or mother's displeasure prevented him from throwing up his profession. To say he was quite what Harold Falcon desired to see him, without direct interference, is to go beyond the truth ; but he fell upon times when certain eccentricities of costume were not harshly judged, excepting by an older school. Dandyism of one kind, the tight, well-fitting, highly-polished in boots and manners, had made way for a different style. A moustache was not remarkable, nor a slouched hat highly censurable. Clothes were not meant to fit, so that loose trousers, and shooting-coats, or a near approach to it, passed muster, without subjecting the wearer to unpleasant remarks. Harold Falcon felt, though he didn't say, that with his good looks he was not pre-eminently gentlemanly, for he was very handsome, that blue-eyed feminine sort of beauty which belongs so much to the upper classes. He was very attractive, but he was neither an English gentleman nor a good dresser.

Twenty years ago there would have been but one opinion ; when a strike among the tailors would have entailed serious inconvenience upon every gentleman in London. One likes now to have one's clothes made by Poole, by Bennett, Stultz, Hammond, Browne, or

any other well-known firm. But they are no longer inimitable in their cut (only in their workmanship), by a whole host of Nichollses, Moseses, and Doudneys. The shopman's apprentice can dress like a Brummell at a fourth of the cost. And from the fashion of coats and trousers now, a man might well go without a tailor for six months, on an emergency, particularly if his wife were blest with a clever and obliging maid. Twenty years ago we should have said unhesitatingly, of George Fellowes, that he was not a gentleman; he is a bold man who ventures to predicate that of a suit of clothes now.

He was a very good fellow, with certain faults, easily led, but truthful and independent. Given to falling in love, and rather inconstant: more than cheerful, and willing to take the world as he found it. Since Harold Falcon had been less in town, and had let his house at Egmont, George Fellowes had made the most of his welcome at the Hall, or as he was pleased to tell his friends at McGilp's and elsewhere, most ungratefully, 'The 'All. Old Cripplegate always calls it so; and when I first came to England I always thought it was the right thing to do. My grandfather's a Dutchman, and he speaks ten times as good English as——'

'Your father-in-law,' shouts one of McGilp's most promising pupils; upon which Fellowes throws a plate full of bones and scraps at the offender, pretending to be offended, but mightily tickled with the soft impeachment.

'What do you do there all day, Fellowes? old Gilp's as savage as a bear.'

'Do there? why, go out riding on the carriage horses, and have croquet on the lawn, and pic-nics in the park, and the most tremendous feeds. I'm painting him a lot of pictures; and we're going to dine at one of the great City dinners in the winter, that I may make him a sketch of a fellow called 'Arker. He's the loudest voice in England—but one can't sketch his voice you know.'

Then he had to submit to more badinage on the subject of the young lady, whose name having slipped out by accident, was the subject of various rhymes, to say nothing of puns. 'Bella, horrida Bella' said one friend.

'Isabella, very odd fella,' said another. A third coupled her with a 'a gingham umbrella;' and a fourth wished to know whether he would 'sell her,'—all of which witticisms were parried with just that amount of force and dexterity which said, Come on again.

Of course the position of George Fellowes when he first came to England, and for some time afterwards, was anomalous. Noblemen, well-known patrons of art, will pick up stray genius, undeveloped talent, wherever they can find it. Mæcenas and Pollio are useful characters, and not uncostly to maintain. Jew-dealers and curiosity vendors find original Rembrandt manufacturers are not unlikely men to have located with them, promising capability for high art. But what was poor Hawkestone to do with such a thing when he had it? Well, we all know now how far from this view of his obligations to old Jansen's god-child were his notions when he invited him to ask for assistance in a strange land. It was only natural that everyone should set it down to this cause: and all his friends very properly said, — 'I wonder whether Hawkestone's *protégé* will turn out a great man. What can he know about art?' And when he died, they derived considerable amusement from Harold's difficulties. 'He might as well have bought him a white elephant, a mummy, or a Circassian slave,' said they.

The secret of Harold Falcon's life, then, was at length known. To few, it is true; but it was no longer a secret which he shared only with those who he was assured would not make it known. On the contrary, Dryden had already told it to George Falcon, to Sir Samuel Cripplegate, and was only weighing in his mind how long it should be kept from Lord Falconberg. The wary lawyer, after all determined that it must go from him to the earl, or not at all. He now regretted that he had mentioned the subject at all; or that he had not gone at once to Harold. But he and Harold were not friends; in fact, they were nearly enemies; and Dryden was not a man to forget or to forego revenge, when it was in his power to achieve it. Harold did not like Mr. Dryden; and it was by his influence that a certain portion of the business of the Falconberg estates had gone elsewhere than into his pockets. For Harold Falcon he

cared nothing, but he cared much for himself; and he was by no means certain that belling the cat might not be the best means of insuring his own reward.

Lord Falconberg had his faults, good as he was. His family pride, as revolving round his own house, was very great. He had no false pride. He would have associated with any good or great man: poverty, when respectable, was by him to be respected: humility of birth was no drawback to his esteem—it was an accident entirely out of the reach of man to rectify. But what is called a *mésalliance* in his own family was a thing scarcely to be forgiven. Harold knew this as well or better than the lawyer; and as once he feared to provoke him, now he feared to grieve him, more even than Dryden did. It was from this reticence that he had lived with a burden, unpardoned, unshared, unmitigated for twenty years. Anybody could understand how it happened: and though he at this distance of time looked back upon this strange infatuation with wonder and amazement, the world (had they known it as he knew it) would have been even more lenient to his folly than he to himself.

When Lord Cranstone destroyed himself, Harold Falcon was a beggar. He was not only a beggar in the ordinary sense of the word, which means that he owed thousands he could not pay, and would henceforth be dependent for mere bread upon his uncle, until his aunt should give him a new start in life,—but he was a beggar in reputation. He could show nowhere; and most probably that damaged reputation would have taken away the only chances of reparation that remained to him. Therefore, however suffering tailors, hatters, boot-makers, '*et hoc genus omne*,' might be shunted for the time, his credit with the world must be saved.

Jansen had done him that service at a heavy price. Why had he asked it? Was he tired or sceptical of bills, post obits, promissory notes, or I O Us? Well, it might be from a practical pauper. Or had he something still at stake, the realisation of which he doubted but by the present salvation of his victim? Bernhard Jansen was the most generous, the most speculative of money-lenders: and now he shot his last and best bolt to get his other ventures back.

It answered. The price was heavy to Harold ; and Jansen took a security which repaid him in kind.

Margaret Jansen, we have said, was a beauty—of a beauty so rare as seldom to be seen. Her course had been somewhat erratic. To what extent her father really never knew. Her mother had been one of those women who live without principle, without care, without feeling. She had one desire : to see her daughter married to a gentleman, by which she meant one higher in the social scale than herself. Her life with Jansen had been without mutual confidence, and on his part without respect or affection. On that fatal beauty she had traded : and whither her speculations had led her she was ignorant. Constant quarrels at home had been the result of her carelessness and profligacy. At one time the girl was sent from home ; at another, she was confined under lock and key. Letters had been waylaid, read, returned ; and threats of personal vengeance vented against the unknown participators in Margaret's disgrace. But Bernhard Jansen had never been able to detect an overt act of immorality ; and flattered himself on his judgment and well-timed security.

It was then that Harold Falcon's difficulties offered a solution of his. Marriage with Captain Falcon would make it all safe. Once in the hands of a husband, and his fears and anxieties were at an end. Harold sold himself for the preservation of his credit with the world ; and accompanying Jansen and his daughter to Nuremberg had contracted the marriage, which we have detailed in the conversation between Dryden and his friend George Falcon.

Harold Falcon had looked steadily at the alternative that presented itself to him. On the one side absolute ruin ; the loss of his place in society, a tarnished name, and certain deprivation of his family's countenance. He dearly loved his Cousin Helen ; but his reckless career had already placed her beyond his reach, whatever might have been his aspirations while holding a position as a gentleman and an officer. How much better to think no more of such a prospect, and to submit patiently and silently to his own condemnation ! On the other, he bargained for immediate release from the destruction that

stared him in the face, a life's expatriation, and a marriage half the disgrace of which was annulled by the necessary severance of former ties.

He comforted himself by a few wretched examples of a like fate. He had heard of men who once had lived as he had done, reckless, indifferent, crippled, who made the cities of Germany, France, and Italy their homes. He heard of their second-hand gambling, and racing, their spurious fashion and impulsive gaiety : men who said they were happy, who forgot friends and connections, and who were satisfied with their daily bread, hardly shared by some faded beauty of a class unfitted for their own ; women whose faults had been the result of the love they bore these very men. How little he knew of the misery which accompanied their gradual downfall, and of the one strong tie, an unequal marriage, which restricted all hope of a return to better things, should the chance ever present itself.

But Harold's trial was of a different kind from this.

Margaret Jansen was a woman of no common mind. She had many faults, she was passionate, self-willed, proud in her way. She had imbibed strange and romantic notions from the injudicious reading with which she had been allowed to feed her brain. She was unhappy in her home ; if she liked her mother's indulgence, she felt no respect for her character ; if she respected her father's talents and energy, she feared the violence of his temper. Hers was a home without love. At the time that Harold Falcon, a gentleman, a man of fashion, had been proposed to her as a husband, when the scheme had been first unfolded to her, she was a prisoner in her father's house, suffering alternately from her mother's caprice and her father's passion. It is scarcely too much to say that of the latter she was in personal fear. Harold had been kind to her. Female beauty, such as hers, could not fail to make an impression on any man : and of all those who came to her father's house, none seemed so likely to please the eye of woman, or so capable of making a home, at least, comfortable, as Harold Falcon. They said nothing of love. Harold's heart was too full of his misfortunes ; and Margaret had other motives which determined her in her reluctant obedience to her father's commands.

She would marry Captain Falcon, if Captain Falcon would marry her.

And so they went to Nuremberg, and they were married. Those few days, in which to escape observation he travelled alone, were heavy days, fraught with pangs of conscience of the sacrifice he was making, of the unalterable condition he was imposing on himself: more than once he hesitated, and wondered whether he should try his uncle's generosity. Pity that he had not. But at that time Lord Falconberg had four sons, and the ties which bound them had not yet been drawn so tight as in after life. He couldn't even trust his Cousin Hawkestone. And above all, he was doing this thing for money, which he had too long despised.





CHAPTER XLI.

HOW HAROLD FALCON BORE HIS SENTENCE.



WITH all that he had thought about his coming marriage, and his patient determination to bear what he had brought down upon himself, and to act honestly and kindly by the woman who had sacrificed herself to him, Harold was scarcely prepared for what did happen. He was never a vain man, and he did not think that his intended wife was dying in love with him. But he did think that she liked him at least better than the crowd of flatterers and dandies that often pretended to want pictures, carving, curiosities, even loans at forty per cent., for the pleasure of making love to Bernhard Jansen's daughter. The necessity for making her an affectionate and honest husband he put down as part of the penalty he was about to pay for having ruined himself by early extravagance; and when he looked at her he thought he might survive the difficulties of the situation. The recollection of Lady Helen was a thorn in his side—but what two things in common were there between his cousin and his present condition and prospects? So he made up his mind to much, but not to the real accident that befell him.

The wedding was quiet and mysterious enough to have satisfied St. Anthony or Miss Martineau, had they been induced to regard matrimony in a more favourable light than they are reported to have done. The ceremony fully completed between a woman in the most ordinary of walking costumes and a thick veil, and an Englishman

in a frock-coat, who walked into an heretical place of worship in a suburb of the town, attended by old Bernhard Jansen and another witness, was not likely to excite a lively interest in Nuremberg, at an early hour of the morning. So they went and returned, no man looking on. Under the least remarkable of external circumstances the future heir to the Falconberg title and estate was married.

But virtually at the church door, or as soon after leaving it as possible, that marriage came to be dissolved. In the house of a relation who had given them shelter, before any baked meats that were to have performed their parts at the *déjeuner* could be cold, the lady declined emphatically to receive her husband. She admitted him to her presence, and with heightened colour and streaming eyes had prayed him to forgive her, declaring she could see him no more. The asseverations of a gentleman, of almost a lover, were inefficient to shake her resolve. She had done him an injury; but it had never presented itself to her in this light before. The vows she had taken were false, the step she had allowed him to take degrading to himself and all connected with him. Would he leave her now, yes, now, and for ever? Her want of courage, she said, had ruined them both. It had failed to console her, and had dragged him a step or two lower with her. Strange to say, she would tell nothing more. Her husband entreated, her father stormed and swore as usual; but his threats had lost their influence. Harold attempted in those first days to solve the mystery of her caprice; but he was unsuccessful even in his endeavour to see her with her own good-will, and certainly without it he had no mission to do more than his duty.

Her father, we have said, interfered, most injudiciously, and without effect; and long before Harold left the neighbourhood, she had been ill, insensible, raving with fever, delirious, and convalescent. Her delirium had partially revealed her situation. Under unpromising conditions a son was born to her; but both the mother and child lived and thrived, when Harold Falcon was back in England.

But Harold Falcon was not as ignorant of these things as a less honest man would like to have remained. With the property left him by his aunt, he had discharged his

debts, most religiously those to Bernhard Jansen. He had sold himself and was glad to pay back the money; he was compelled to pay the penalty too. It had been necessary to tell him of the result of his wife's illness; and he had from that day forwarded to Jansen such sums as he could afford for the maintenance of his wife and the education of her boy, who, as it appeared to him, had an indefinite claim upon him for bare support. As time wore on these remittances became larger; but he neither saw them, nor did he ever vouchsafe the slightest interest in their welfare. He remembered his classics only so far as to repeat with Antigone, 'γάμος ἄγαμος, γάμος ἄγαμος,' and to regard both mother and son as a fatal curse which he had drawn down upon his head by his reckless and ruthless extravagance.

After the death of his cousins at Chamouni, and when he began to realise a certain alteration in his position, which the disinterested world is sure to acknowledge for us, his views became more serious as to his responsibilities, and more cheerless as to the belongings which surrounded him. Harold Falcon and everything connected with him assumed an importance when there was but one life, instead of four, between him and the title. It struck with considerable chill upon him when he first recalled to mind that his wife and her son must share what he certainly never intended to have bartered for money. As long as he was Mr. Falcon, they might have lived and died unlamented, almost forgotten. It might be quite a different thing now. Whoever heard of an earl dying unlamented and forgotten, or even a countess and her son? And if not wholly uninteresting in death, how much less so in life would they be?

In fact, he saw what everybody else might have seen, that if Lord Hawkestone died he would have to stare in the face a newly-found Countess and a Baron Hawkestone, who was not bone of his bone nor flesh of his flesh, and for whom he didn't care one jot. He had assured himself of this, and it was a very bitter pill to swallow. Upon several occasions he had made up his mind to tell Hawkestone: and just as he had positively determined to do so, he was sent to the Castle, and before his return Hawkestone was no more. The singular meeting, too,

of the boy with his cousin ; his fancy for him ; his promise of protection, and his own participation in it, forced on him against his will, were curious but damaging elements in his hopes or plans of quiet or secrecy, if any such he had formed.

In one thing Harold had not been perfectly honest ; and his reticence on the subject was natural. He had never told Jansen, in so many words, who he was, or that he was in any way likely to occupy the situation which awaited him. Nor had Jansen or his wife the slightest suspicion of it, until letters from the boy himself had given them the information. That he should have been living under the roof of Captain Falcon was a strange coincidence. It was casually mentioned by the boy, but it was impossible that a conclusion should not be drawn ; and it was easily confirmed as the correct one by Jansen's friends and correspondents in England.

The Jansens had never mentioned their connection with him to anyone. They seemed willing that it should die out by lapse of time ; and, in fact were so. But Harold himself had another part to play. He recognised a legal right to what the world valued very highly ; and though he would have gladly been without it, he judged it for them as they might have been supposed to value it themselves. Of one thing he was well assured : the person who was some day to be Lord Falconberg must be a gentleman in habits and education, and it was his duty to make him so as far as he could. To have withdrawn him from his inclinations and pursuits roughly and pertinaciously in opposition to his wishes could have had no good effect, and might have been the means of exposing an authority on his part which for the present he chose to conceal. Thus he told George Fellowes nothing. By gentle suggestions he got rid of certain peculiarities, the growth of Düsseldorf and Munich. By giving him a home at Egmont, without appearing to do so, he taught the boy how to dress—no inconsiderable step in education to a German student. He formed him imperceptibly upon the model of English gentlemen whom the young man occasionally saw there ; so that by the time he was making love to Miss Cripplegate and sketches for her father, there was nothing incongruous in recognising the

heir of the Falconbergs in a tall, fair-haired, good-looking, cheerful, but rather foreign-looking young man. Harold Falcon was famous for vacillation, and as he put off day by day the painful announcement he had to make, it became more and more distasteful to him. Obstacles of this kind are like the renewal of bills, the longer you keep them open the worse they become.

Harold Falcon's love for Helen, unlike the love of most men, had been a terrible drawback to him. He would not have given her a moment's pain for the world ; but perhaps nothing could do so more effectually than the disappointment preparing for her. The hopes of his family, not only of Lord Falconberg, but everyone connected with him, tended one way after the death of Lord Hawkestone—to Harold's marriage. He, at least, had not kept his secret so well but that once or twice his name had been coupled with that of Lady Helen. To one old lady he had questioned the propriety of the marriage of such near relations ; to another, Lady Clara Marchmont, the only surviving sister of Lord Falconberg, who had talked about the requirements of a title and its duties, he had simply, *horresco referens* ! d—d the title and everything connected with it. No man alive had ever been so plagued by good fortune.





CHAPTER XLII.

A LITTLE DINNER.

‘MY DEAR.’ Sir Samuel was wont to be more affectionate now that he had become accustomed to high life. The lady seldom relapsed into tenderness before her people ; frequently into temper.

‘Sir Samuel!’ said she, drawing herself up, and looking at Isabella, who immediately rounded her shoulders a trifle more.

‘Don’t you think we ought to have a little dinner?’

‘Certainly not, Sir Samuel, until we have finished breakfast.’ Here the young lady began laughing, and Sir Samuel smiled as forcibly as he thought his wife’s temperament would allow. The footman left the room rather abruptly.

‘My dear, I mean a little dinner to our friends.’

‘Then, Sir Samuel, be good enough another time to make your language intelligible to your family. And in whose honour do you propose to open your house now?’

‘Well, coming out of the City yesterday I met——’

‘I think we have lately had most of your City friends down here.’

‘Oh, this wasn’t a City friend at all. It was Captain Falcon, my dear. He’s coming down to see his tenants at the Villa on business ; so I asked him to take pot-luck with us afterwards.’

‘I trust you expressed yourself in different language to him.’

As Sir Samuel was not at first aware of any solecism in good breeding or language, he waited a minute or two, chewing the cud, which was a piece of dry toast, of bitter reflection. 'Oh, ah! I see. I said "his mutton," my dear. Of course, he knows I mean those hentrys and things. He understands what I mean by mutton just as well as Bella there.' Bella perfectly understood pot-luck, and preferred it to mutton. It left an ampler margin, and was considerably nearer the truth.

'Who's coming, papa, besides Captain Falcon?' said the conscious young lady.

'Well, I asked Dryden—my old friend, Dryden. You know Dryden, Lady Cripplegate,' added the City gentleman, throwing a sop which he knew would be acceptable to Cerberus. 'I think, too, we must have the Weltons and old Lady Carbuncle; and we shall want one more young man for Miss Welton, to make up the party. Who do you say, Bella? There's Stringer, or Tipping;' the lady's face fell, and as she gave no sign of pleasure he pretended to hesitate, 'or that artist fellow, what's-his-name.' This was a very poor attempt at deception.

'Do you mean Mr. Fellowes, papa?' Lady Cripplegate only looked her sentiments.

'Ah, Fellowes. Why not, my lady?'

'Only because he's been here within the last few days, and I think neither Mr. Dryden nor Captain Falcon would care about meeting him.'

'I think he's just the man for them. Dryden likes art, and I'm sure he'd be glad to meet him; and he was very intimate at the Villa before Captain Falcon let it. A good dinner once a week does these young painters a deal of good, my lady. I'm for Fellowes; what do you say, Bella?' But as Bella had left the room, the knight and his lady had it all to themselves.

'That young man's too much here, Sir Samuel.'

'I don't see that, my dear. Persons in our position ought to patronise art; it's a duty we owe to society.'

'Fiddle-de-dee about art. If you want your daughter to marry a beggar, you'd better say so at once, and I dare say she'll be found agreeable; but I'm not going to patronise shilly-shallying, and love-making, and all that sort of thing. Unequal marriages aren't to my taste; so

let's buy our high art at the regular shops, and pay for it as we get it.'

Have not my readers beheld the stately war horse, covered with trappings and in the best of company, prancing down St. James's Street on a great occasion, treading as if he were afraid of breaking the stones, and curveting to the heel of his rider and the admiration of the crowd? And have they not seen the same stately animal away from the gaping crowd, in his own green pastures, stripped of his trappings and free from his rider, capering about, now playing, now kicking and flourishing his tail in mere wantonness of enjoyment: let them tell me whether he was not to be more admired in his natural ease and grace than in the grandeur of his artificial state? So was it with Lady Cripplegate. When she was my lady, and clothed herself in the admiration of her servants, her guests, her neighbours, or her daughter, was she not grand and stately, prancing and curveting, covered with the trappings of fashion and fearful of displaying her natural charms? but how much more charming when she forgot the world she had been thrust into unawares, and was cantering and playing in the world into which she had been born, and which was the natural pasture in which she truly delighted to revel.

So she was now; and as she folded her arms as of old and faced her spouse, he would have been less than man if he had failed to acknowledge and to admire the homely sense of her homely answer.

'You're right, Betsy,' said the old gentleman, 'but I can't help myself now, for I asked 'em together. We must look after the girl. It won't do to throw her at every blockhead that comes in the way.' Saying which, he gave his old woman, as he used to call her, a hearty kiss.

'No, Sam, for if you throw such things as that at people, there's very few of our acquaintances that wouldn't be learning to catch. However, we'll have our dinner party: and I'll make Bella write a note to the Weltons, and send Splinters over on the mare. We shalln't want the carriage till the afternoon.'

Sir Samuel kept his suspicions to himself, and only chuckled inwardly; and in the course of the morning

he found that he should have a very comfortable party of ten to take, what he called, pot-luck, on the morrow. Pot-luck, on this occasion, meant a 'red-breeches day'—the best dinner-service, all the helpers, with Splinters at their head, the best dress-liveries, and the best of everything that the combined efforts of Grove, Gibley, and Baily could produce; and Sacks, as a great favour and with the true interests of the family at heart, brought up some Madeira that he never treated his master to—but on very great occasions.

By eight o'clock the next day, as the evenings were getting cool, before a small wood fire the guests were assembled. Everybody knows the sort of thing. A large comfortably-furnished room; the men altogether about the fire, Lady Carbuncle, a blaze of turban, redness of nose, and very white and ample shoulders, at a distance, but the remains of what Sir Samuel called a uncommon fine woman, on close inspection. Miss Welton was discussing the novel of the past season (it wasn't one of mine) with Miss Cripplegate, and young Fellowes was leaning over the back of that lady's chair, when the folding-doors opened and dinner was announced. There's a pleasure in folding-doors, it looks to me as if your dinner came to you instead of your being troubled to go to it. To avoid any recurrence of its savours, however, you should have a second drawing-room farther off, to which you can retire for your coffee and music, should you be insatiable enough to want anything after your claret.

'We want your assistance here, Captain Falcon, about the hounds,' said Mr. Welton, an enthusiastic sportsman, who was, as he believed, now sacrificing himself for the sake of the hounds by coming to Egmont. The roads were bad, the nights dark, and his coachman scarcely to be depended upon in a liberal servants' hall, which Mr. Sacks' appearance indicated.

'I should be glad to give it, if I were ever here, but I'm tied to my own county. Without an acre of land beyond my garden, I fear I could not be of much active assistance.'

Harold was already a subscriber, but condemned all woodland counties in practice, as fit for nothing but the

encouragement of poachers and wandering tourists. Mr. Dryden sat on the opposite side of the table to Harold, but lower down, he having the seat of honour next to his hostess—opposite to him was Mr. Welton. Harold and Dryden were so placed as to necessitate but little intercourse, but it was impossible to avoid seeing that the distance was materially increased by Harold Falcon's dislike. They were both handsome, both distinguished looking men; but the one never trusted the other, and Harold kept the lawyer at arm's-length both before and after dinner. It was perhaps a prejudice, but it was a strong one.

The young artist said nothing until he was appealed to on the subject on which he was most capable of speaking—the continent, and his art. He was a dabbler in literature too, but that was out of the range of pretence excepting in the case of the young women. Altogether Harold Falcon had reason to be satisfied with his *protégé*, and he had begun to dress less like a foreigner. If he would but trust his tailor! thought he. It might have been remarked, and was by one person, that Captain Falcon addressed him as little as he did Mr. Dryden, beyond the simplest greeting: openly taking no notice of his occupation, though his attention had been called to it by Lady Cripplegate.

‘Our young friend has delighted us with the sketches he has been making for Sir Samuel. We have several views of the home park, Captain Falcon. The sunsets here are marvellous for richness of colouring.’ Lady Cripplegate had some faint idea that since Sir Samuel’s knighthood they had been made a little better for her; almost to order, if I may so speak.

‘I’m glad of it. My cousin took great interest in him. You seem to have made great improvements in the house.’

‘I think we have. You know, we really almost rebuilt it. The Italian style, after all, for an edifice of this magnitude, is the most commodious.’

‘I hardly know whether you can count upon the atmosphere of Italy, charming as this place is for trying it,’ replied Harold.

‘Well, we have the winter to come. We must endea-

vour to keep the house warm with society. I hope we shall have you here.'

'Ah! you don't care about my tenants, Lady Cripplegate.'

'To tell you the truth, Captain Falcon, Sir Samuel hasn't called. One is very anxious to give as much countenance as possible to the neighbourhood; but persons in his position must draw the line somewhere. We meet in the train and in church, and I think that's as far as we can go.'

'Perhaps so. On the one hand to London, on the other to heaven.' 'But one ought to be very particular about the company in which the journey is taken,' he added to himself. And though the lady did not hear him, she didn't like Harold quite so much as she did Mr. Dryden, who never laughed at her.

'Magistrates! never heard such a thing in my life! Committed him. They are the greatest fools alive,' said the civic dignitary, from the other end.

'You're not in the commission of the peace, Sir Samuel?' inquired Mr. Welton, with a bland smile, vowing inwardly that he was not going to stand this vulgarity for all the foxes in the world, and determined upon asking for an arrangement by which the whole of the committee should take it in turn to visit Cripplegate.

'Not since I was Lord Mayor Sir,' says that worthy and unconscious knight. 'We did get justice done in the City; but these country benches are most incomprehensible. Six months and hard labour for a fowl! Talking of fowls, Mrs. Welton tells me that her poultry-yard pays a good percentage, to say nothing of the convenience. Now, I must drive over and see it; I must indeed. I want all the people here to do the same.'

'Lady Cripplegate or your daughter must give great attention to it then, Sir Samuel: Mrs. Welton and the girls are always among them,' replied the easily appeased county gentleman, when he heard one of his favourite hobbies applauded so warmly and unexpectedly.

'Lady Cripplegate! oh, bless you, her ladyship won't do anything of that sort; and as to Isabella! I was thinking of the poor people, what a thing it 'ud be for them to cut out those rascally poulterers.' Isabella looked at

her mother, who put an end to the discussion by discreetly rising, and Mrs. Welton, with a rather gloomy countenance, sailed back again.

It's astonishing what mischief the best-intentioned vulgarity may do, and how clear of it good-breeding, with the most vicious propensities, may manage to steer.

'Not related to the Fellowes of Hazledean?' said Mr. Welton to George Fellowes.

'No. I was born in Germany.'

'Still I imagined it possible. By-the-way, Captain Falcon, I think they are connected with your family?'

'My uncle's eldest sister, Lady Mary, married one of the Fellowes of Hazledean; she has been dead many years, and so has he. I hardly ever knew them. The son? yes, he's a barrister. I know him; but I seldom see him now.'

He might have added that Lady Mary married against her family's consent. That her husband, after spending all her money, broke her heart, and died himself, leaving not more than enough to educate their only son, the gentleman in question. Mr. Welton saw that the subject was displeasing, and had the good feeling to drop the conversation.

Shortly after they joined the ladies.

Dryden had looked anything but comfortable during the discussion of the branches of the Fellowes' family and was not sorry when it came to an end. He had cautiously refrained from saying a word on the subject: and soon after coffee Captain Falcon's carriage was announced. 'I thought you were going to sleep in the village, Captain Falcon,' said his host. 'We could have given you a shake-down,'—Lady Cripplegate looked up,—'a bed, I mean, in the house; room enough to put up a friend or two, as you see,' saying which he took a general view of the well-lighted and spacious apartment.

'No, thank you all the same; I go to London to-night. It's not an unpleasant drive; and I must start for Hawkestone to-morrow early.' Saying which the captain took his leave, and wondered why everybody should call him captain, when he took sedulous care to leave his address always as Mr. Falcon.

‘Pleasant gentlemanly man,’ said Welton; ‘good neighbour. I wish we had more like him in Dullford.’

Dryden said nothing. It is a great pleasure to know, on leaving early, that you must run the gauntlet of all you leave behind, who have an opinion of their own, though some advantage may accrue from remembering how few there are possessed of that inestimable qualification.

In the mean time George Fellowes had lost no time in engaging Isabella in a confidential conversation, and had been alternately selecting pieces of music and rejecting them, while the lady sat on a music-stool which turned first one way then another, and would have been invaluable to a lady or gentleman with a stiff neck. Catching her mother’s eye fixed upon her, with a conscious look she turned to the piano, and having executed with little fidelity but some taste a prelude, she commenced a song. The song finished, soda-water and sherry were brought in, and the company took the hint, Mr. Welton and his family going to his carriage and the rest of the company to their rooms, Sir Samuel and Dryden excepted.

‘What did Falcon mean by his relationship to Fellowes? I scarcely understood him.’

‘What he said; Lady Mary Falcon married a Fellowes. He was a *roué* and a drunkard, killed himself, in fact; and she died some time before, they say of a broken heart. The Falconberg title lapses when the male branch fails, and the property goes to the sisters, or their representatives, one of whom is my friend, Fellowes of the Temple.’

‘Then this youngster here is surely a relation of some sort?’

‘Ah, that I know nothing about. I didn’t know till the other day the name of this boy; and then I forgot all about the Falcons and the Fellowes being connections:’ that was not true, Mr. Dryden. He did know it, and it struck him as very singular that this young man should have borne the name. ‘Perhaps it was the name that first interested Lord Hawkestone.’

‘Then you don’t know anything more about the lad than you did in the summer.’

‘Humph,’ ejaculated Mr. Dryden, pondering as to the

loss he might sustain if he allowed old Cripplegate to discard the youngster, and afterwards to find out that he was heir to such a brilliant position as that. He could pretend to be utterly ignorant, to be sure ; then he would only be accounted a fool, and be replaced by a clever man. He couldn't give colour to his own suspicions, for if they proved false by any accident, then he would be in a worse position than before. Sir Samuel might forgive the loss of a big fish, but he'd never forgive being pulled into a hole by a little one. Temporising, though difficult, was best ; so he determined to tell the story, as far as he had heard it, and to let the old man and his wife do as they liked about believing it.

So he did tell the story then and there as he had told it before. He didn't say that he believed the boy to be really Harold's son, begotten out of wedlock, legitimatised for the money's sake, and deserted with his mother capriciously and cruelly, when Harold saw a prospect of better days. That is what he himself believed, because it is what he would probably have been guilty of himself, and he knew hundreds more who would have been so too. The coincidence of names was odd, and the patronage of Lord Hawkestone so odd, that he believed it a 'case for a jury,' another mode with Mr. Dryden for expressing his conviction that, true or false, there was every prospect of its satisfying an uninquiring and dunder-headed public.

'And you've no doubt about that ?' said Sir Samuel, preparing to go for the night.

'I've no doubt about the truth of what I heard in Nuremberg, because I saw the document in question ; and I've no doubt about your friend Fellowes being the grandson of one Bernhard Jansen, unless Mr. McGilp is a most accomplished and singularly consequential liar ; for he knew nothing at all about the previous question of Captain Falcon's supposed marriage. A very gentlemanly young man he seems to be,' added Mr. Dryden, in a patronising way, which more than retaliated on the absent youth the cool superiority assumed by Harold Falcon.

'And if this is true that young man will be——'

'Lord Falconberg's heir,' with which he went to bed,

drawing down the corners of his mouth and muttering to himself, 'One good turn deserves another.'

The following morning Sir Samuel had emerged from his bath, and was puffing and blowing like a grampus from the effects of it, when he heard through his dressing-room door the progress of the wife of his bosom in her toilette. Now if there was a time in which her ladyship was to be caught in a good easy natural mood for the discussion of anything, it was during this hour. Whether the mind so far assimilated to the body as to disrobe and present itself, as one may say, *in puris naturalibus*, at such a time, or whether the externals of dignity and state did act upon Lady Cripplegate as the Drury Lane properties once acted upon the late Mr. Elliston, when he blessed his people after the fashion and with more than the sincerity of George the Fourth, I leave physiologists to determine. She was always accessible at those times to the business of common life, and it was impossible for Sir Samuel not to have discovered that her ladyship under bare polls, and in a morning wrapper, was not her ladyship in her best front and bugles.

In consideration of this the gentleman rubbed himself into a very pleasant state of high spirits, and having progressed to a certain state of decorous preparation, knocked at the door. Poking his head into the room to see that Lady Cripplegate was not under the hands of her maid, which would have at once reduced the pleasures of communication to freezing-point, he said,

'My dear, I'm glad we asked the painter—good move, very.'

'Nonsense, Sam; he'll move off to-day, and that will be better. It's high time Bella was looking about her—all girls do at her time of life—I'm sure I did, and——'

'Fortune threw me in your way, my dear,' said Sir Samuel, proceeding to lather his chin very effectively, and with the very hottest of water short of boiling.

'You mean old Botcher's death threw fortune in your way, so I married you; and I don't intend Bella to do anything else. Love in a cottage! There's not room for a really respectable passion.'

'Not such as you get into, my love,' said Sam slyly. 'But listen to me, I've some news for you—only; bless

your soul, you mustn't say a word, or there'll be the devil to pay, and all the women in the county will be trying to walk round Bell, and that wouldn't do at all.' It was now the lady's turn to look astonished, which she did.

'And where did you hear all this?' said she, after Sir Samuel had told her the story, as he himself had heard it, with the suggestions of his own fancy. 'From Dryden, of course. I hope you're satisfied.'

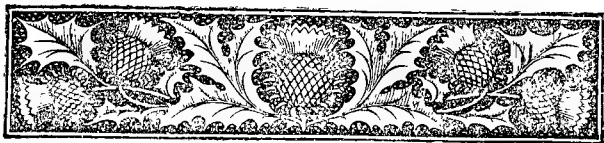
Lady Cripplegate did not say anything, but finished her toilette with the assistance of her maid, and when she appeared at the breakfast table, her greeting was as stately as ever.

Towards the afternoon Sir Samuel found her in the library, and as he was going out she turned round and read aloud, *apropos* of nothing,—

'Earl of Falconberg, creation, 1481; Baron Hawkestone, 1372; Edward Maurice Fitzhenry Falcon, son of the 11th Earl, by Margaret, daughter of Henry, Duke of Spillsborough, born at Hawkestone Castle, 1792; married, in 1827, Helen, daughter of the 6th Baron Harcourt—she died in 1843. He was educated at Eton, and Christ Church, Oxford; was a Lieutenant-Colonel of the Grenadier Guards; retired in 1832. Lord-Lieutenant of the county of —, Colonel of Militia, M.P. for Greasepalm, accepted the Chiltern Hundreds (what could he want with a few hundreds at such a time?), and is patron of seven livings.'

'Do you mean to say that George will be all that?'

'I didn't mean to say anything at all about it; but if he's an earl with thirty thousand a year he can be anything he likes.' Such was old Cripplegate's creed, and he wasn't going to turn Dissenter, when he thought himself likely to reap the benefit of his orthodoxy.



CHAPTER XLIII.

THE JANSENS AGAIN.

THE winter passed as it had done for some centuries, bringing its share of discomfort to the rich and poor. It carried off the old and infirm, and improved the position of none of our acquaintance. Lord Falconberg grew perceptibly weaker: Harold became no more cheerful: Lady Helen refused Lord Belleisle, who, if he ceased to be a lover, remained a friend: George Falcon came back to his work much as he left it in the autumn: Dryden took no further steps in the elucidation of the mystery he had entered upon: McGilp was back from his autumnal trip in the Isle of Skye to the realities of earth: Sir Samuel Cripplegate had become a sportsman, the —shire Jorrock, they called him: George Fellowes progressed in his suit with Isabella Cripplegate, and Jansen and his daughter were still in the neighbourhood of Cleves.

It is of the latter that I wish to speak. I can easily imagine that Bernhard Jansen may have puzzled my readers. He was not consistent. It should rather be said that the conduct exhibited at a later period of his life was not consistent with his character as a younger man. I should like to know upon what principle it was expected that it should be. What's the use of years, what of experience? What the natural effect of time upon the passions, the feelings, the character in general? If there be one thing more calculated than another to work a change of temperament in man or woman, it is

the decay of that physical system, the natural decay of that energy which accompanies failing years. Old men may be passionate, or irritable, or obstinate, but they are not violent, headstrong, or determined—at least, not as they were. It is the nature of age to become, as Horace says (I don't know that any other author is ever quoted now, and I have reduced my reading to keep pace with the age in which we live), ‘*Dilator, spe longus, iners, avidusque futuri.*’

So Bernhard Jansen was no longer that violent, headstrong, determined person, which we have known him when in Oxfordshire, but had become tamed and curbed by time and circumstances.

But we must go back to look at him twenty years ago, and endeavour to explain and analyse his motives, which dictated his conduct in our story. He hated his wife: this is a very bad trait in a man's character; but like a French murder of a very heinous kind, may have extenuating circumstances attached to it. She was a very difficult wife to love. There is no saying what *she* might have been under another kind of despotism (of course no wife is very good under any other form of government), but Jansen's was a despotism utterly opposed to all her feelings and idiosyncracies. She was false, he was true; she was cunning, he was open; she was niggardly, he was generous; she loved money for itself, he loved money for its uses; she was vain, frivolous, wanton, delighted in show, and was devoid of principle. He was independent, firm, indifferent to ostentation, and always acted upon principle, however bad it might be. He was of an overbearing disposition, cruel, and tyrannical to his dependants, his wife and daughter among them; but she was provoking, childish, and selfish to a degree. And he was a man of taste and refinement at heart, feelings which her vulgarity daily outraged. How they ever came together I cannot say. When she died she was unregretted—I forgot to say that she had done so much against her inclination, for I thought her of so little importance. But it took place in Germany many years ago.

Bernhard Jansen's love for his daughter, in the earlier part of his life, had been of a mixed character. Her beauty created in him, as in most men, a sort of pride,

which he mistook for affection. How much of parental love may be attributed to the score of that dependence on himself which a father creates. He did love her with something more than this, I suppose, for it was demonstrative in outward marks of tenderness; but perhaps it appeared the greater as being contrasted with that for his wife.

When Bernhard Jansen proposed his daughter as a wife to Harold Falcon, he had certainly no idea of the mischief that had been brewing. He knew her to be wilful, frivolous, and wrong-headed; but he thought that her want of principle had led her into no danger beyond one of those flirtations with which the neighbourhood abounded. Some men err in this respect from utter simplicity of character, and wake to find themselves cruel sufferers for a venial or constitutional fault. Jansen's was not of this kind, but it was equal to it, and the result the same. His was preoccupation.

And when the knowledge came to him, as it did after his daughter's marriage with Harold, which was to put an end to his anxieties on her account, the disappointment and affliction must not be underrated by those whose feelings are more explosive and impulsive. Jansen was a very severe sufferer. He was racked with doubts what line of conduct to pursue. There are fathers who would leave a child to the tender mercies of a world which never wholly forgives that error in woman, and is consistently lenient to men. There are fathers who, with a beautiful, sheltering pity, worth all the love in the world, Christian-like, protective, forgiving and forgetful of their own wrongs in those of their child, would open their half-broken hearts to the lamb that had strayed, to water its repentance with their tears. Jansen was neither the one nor the other. He was not likely to forget or forgive in a moment; and he was as little likely to cast her off. He chose a middle course; it took time to reconcile him to his own determination; but there came a time when he learnt to talk to Margaret without a frown, in something more than monosyllables; to nurse her child, and to converse with her on indifferent subjects. He was, in some respects, a very just man; his hard and impracticable spirit made him so. Thus he knew that his own

conduct had been injudicious ; his wife's unprincipled ; and when she died, he softened towards the only beings whom he could well call his own.

Margaret's illness, too, which had left her at death's door, had had a great influence upon him. It prevented him from acting with undue severity at the time he was most disposed to do so ; hence his eventual forbearance, which, as he grew in years, turned to a feeling of kindness for her, as great as any he had felt for her since she was a girl.

Taking into consideration, therefore, Jansen's peculiarities, it is not remarkable that even for years the painful subject of his daughter's misconduct had never been discussed between them or before him. The attempt had once been made by his wife, and been received by him with such a storm of violent indignation, with such passionate expressions of grief and displeasure, as effectually to prevent its recurrence.

It was years before he heard the truth ; and it is doubtful whether he believed it thoroughly at the time of which we are speaking.

However, the reader had better hear it, as we are approaching the end of our story ; and though I am proud of attaching no importance to 'real life,' this happens to be about the only part of the story that has a syllable of truth in it. Mrs. or Frau Jansen, as she was habitually called at home, had some distant connections living in a retired part of Scotland. Whether devised as a punishment, or for the prevention of Margaret Jansen's infirmities, her father decided upon sending her from home, and no more melancholy sentence could be devised than banishment to the Isle of Skye. From that place, it was asserted by Margaret herself, she had been married—secretly, clandestinely, but most effectively and legitimately, married. That she had managed to deceive her parents by private correspondence with her lover, who had followed her there ; and that she had deceived in like manner the persons to whom she had been intrusted, a rude fisherman and his illiterate wife and daughter. That she had wandered about where she liked and when she liked ; that she was constantly, in fact daily, with her lover ; that there had been neither fraud, force, nor

deceit of any kind ; and that she as firmly believed in his intention to take her away from her home when certain family circumstances had happened, as that she believed in her own existence. All this she averred ; and if they were not the ravings of an over-wrought brain, they were the words of sober sadness. He did not redeem his promise. She waited, half heart-broken, at her father's house. She wrote letter after letter to his addresses, and received none in return. She applied by unmistakable means, at his college and elsewhere, and learnt as unmistakably that there was no such person to be found.

Then she knew she had been deceived. She reluctantly admitted to herself and to her mother the shameful and humiliating truth that lay buried beneath her bosom. But one means of escape remained, and that unexpectedly presented itself in a marriage with Harold. Her mother urged it, her own fears seconded that evil counsel ; and the result the reader knows. Then came the reaction of some honest principle, but too late to save the man whom, if she could not love, she was prepared to respect ; and she released him from a participation in her deceit by giving him only a part of her wretched confession, and concealing that which would have freed him from his embarrassment. Had Harold known at the time, or even later, the fact of her previous marriage, he might have taken steps to have secured himself from a delusion which had embittered his existence. Unfortunately, Margaret imagined she had freed him by her simple act of manumission, and by her well-kept resolve to see him and to trouble him no more.

Jansen's pride, and a very natural feeling, induced him to acquiesce in a reticence not very culpable. 'Let us live in peace, Margaret,' said he, when he had heard the whole of her history. 'You wronged Harold Falcon, yourself, and me ; you can do no good now by stirring hand or foot. Harold Falcon is gone. Silence must serve his turn best. Fellowes may be living ; may claim you yet for his wife. You can do nothing to accelerate that event. Your boy will know his father in that case. According to your account, he will lose little should such an event never occur.' This was almost the longest and harshest speech the old man had yet made

upon the subject; and the once wilful Margaret Jansen acquiesced.

All this was very wrong; but for people who did not want an *exposé*, it was very politic. And at the end of twenty years George Fellowes, senior, had never been heard of. It was almost excusable had she chosen to consider herself Mrs. Falcon. It was well, perhaps, with all her old instincts, that she did not know of the temptation to do so.

We said winter had passed. An early spring made the Clevische Berg bright with its early foliage and warm soil, and Margaret and her father sat in an arbour at the bottom of the garden, the old Hollander enjoying his handsome, richly-coloured meerschaum, a work of art in itself, with his Flasche Marcobrunner (for he loved good wine) by his side.

‘You have had letters from England, Margaret?’

‘I have; from George.’ And Margaret grew red, and looked uncomfortable, as she did whenever she had to mention certain names.

‘And he speaks of—of Captain Falcon?’

‘Yes; and of Lady Helen. Sir,’ for Margaret now always addressed her father somewhat formally, ‘do you think we are acting quite honestly?’

‘Then what to do? Can we tell him all, without some proof?’ said the old man.

‘But do you not know what George will be? at least you tell me so, if this Captain Falcon is the same. Of course he must be, for his name is Harold.’

‘Doubtless, legally he is Captain Falcon’s heir, and will be Lord Hawkestone; who could have believed it, only so short a time ago? To tell him now, without proofs of—well, Margaret, I must say it—the first marriage, is to bring upon him the penalty you have so honestly spared him.’ Margaret let her knitting drop into her lap, and sat with her hands folded above it. ‘I would willingly spare him still. My boy will be better as an honestly born artist than as——’ here she touched her eyes with her handkerchief, and turned away from her father’s gaze. ‘But they say he ought to have married his cousin,—Lady Helen, George calls her. It is this fear hanging over him that has blighted his happiness for all this time.

Oh, how wicked I have been, and how kind and forbearing he, when he might have exposed us.' Margaret did not know that Harold had some mixed motives for his silence too.

'But the proofs, Margaret. Dead or alive, we must have the proofs or hold our tongues.'

'And you, Sir, have heard nothing. Nothing more than you told me?'

'Not much. The advertisement remained unanswered for the certificate or any proofs of the marriage, and your mother's relations are dead or have left the place. If we could but have heard through them of the clergyman, or of any George Fellowes. And yet it seems now so wrong to leave Captain Falcon in ignorance of it all.' Then Bernhard Jansen applied sedulously to his pipe again. 'Something should be done. Margaret, we must go to London.' Saying which he finished his *Marcobrunner*, and went into the house. But before he started for London he heard something—well—perhaps to his advantage.





CHAPTER XLIV.

STARTLING INTELLIGENCE.

TWO mornings later Herr Jansen was vigorously employed. His portmanteau, like other portmanteaux, was much too full; and shirts and handkerchiefs, for he had imbibed English notions of cleanliness, kept peeping out and tumbling about, just as yours or mine do on inspection by the Prussian Douaniers, who might learn politeness from the French. His clothes, too, it must be considered, were of a large pattern, as well as his boots. Though my boot-maker once told me 'Boots are boots, and always cost two guineas, Sir,' still they don't all take the same space.

Jansen himself was in his shirt-sleeves, looking at the thing in despair.

'Let me help you, Sir,' said Margaret; 'there, that will do; now sit down while I lock it. No, not there,' as her father took his seat on his bedstead,—'on the portmanteau.' He obeyed her, and the effect was electrical.

At that moment the servant girl brought in a letter. 'From England,' said he, and proceeded to read it. To have looked at his face no one would have thought that it contained startling intelligence. Certainly Margaret did not guess its contents, but continued to busy herself in preparations for her father's journey.

The letter was from Mr. McGilp. In pity for the half-foreign education of his correspondent the good Scot had endeavoured to translate his native tongue into English, and we will endeavour to give a retranslation to save the time and clear up the uncertainties of the reader.

‘My dear old Friend,—

‘The boy [which he called ‘callant’] is an idle young scapegrace; he never would work at his profession, and now he’s fallen in love. I always remark that when men don’t work they do fall in love. It’s the “vera warst” sign I know of; and I’d prefer of the twa they should fall into the Serpentine. He’s got painting a young woman, one Sir Samuel Cripplegate’s daughter; whether it’s her cheeks or her portrait, I don’t rightly know. She’s no great good, I’m told, except in the way o’ siller. They say she’s a haughty [he wrote ‘toutie’] lass, and won’t look at him. Perhaps that’s all the better for his chance, as he’s not over winsome. But you needn’t fash yourself about that. Handsome is as handsome does, and he’s no beauty. He’s been writing books too, and no good ever comes o’ books. There’s too many of them to be writ by honest men.

‘But I’ve some grand news for you. I’ve found the minister for you, that married that feckless body, Peggie Jansen, years ago. It’s Mr. Dalrymple. He was a young mon then, or doubtless he’d a remonstrated. He’s in London now, and ready and willing to swear anything, affidavits and all. He’s come all the way from the north of Scotland, and won’t be happy if he don’t help to tell a few lies before he goes back again. He knew the coast of Inverness as soon as he saw it in my grand picture for the Royal Academy, painted from the sketches I made in Skye in the autumn. He’s a judge of art, is Mr. Dalrymple, and well enough for a minister. He says he’s brought the parchments with him, and remembers the marriage weel, as it was the first he ever officiated at. Ye’d better speer your way to London as soon as you can.

‘Yours truly,
‘PETER MCGILP.’

The letter had an effect upon Bernhard Jansen, as might have been expected. He read it twice through, and then without a word gave it to Margaret, from whose face every particle of colour vanished as she proceeded line by line to unravel the meaning of the writer.

‘You’d better pack your things too, Margaret. We’ll

start to-night. There's the diligence from Creveld will take us to Emerich, and we can go by the Rhine boat to-morrow by Rotterdam.' Then he took hold of his daughter's cold hand and led her down stairs, where he poured out a large glass of his favourite Marcobrunner, which he regarded as a specific in most cases, and made her drink it. Then in his newly-found hopes, he took her into his arms, and kissed her. He tried to get his face away in time, but before he could do so, one good heavy tear, worthy of a giant in trouble, fell upon his daughter's cheek, and it is difficult to say which was the more astonished of the two. When a man only sheds a tear once in his life-time, it ought to be a large one.

Bernhard Jansen left his daughter at Keyser's Hotel in Bridge Street, and took his way along Fleet Street, towards the house of his friend McGilp. He had not been in London for some years, and though there was plenty on the way to have arrested the attention of a less observant person, his mind was so preoccupied that he scarcely noticed any alteration until he reached St. Giles's on the road to Newman Street. There he may be forgiven if his natural feelings were momentarily smothered in wonder at the changes that had taken place. Having first stared about him, and then asked his way of a policeman, he found himself in another ten minutes at his friend's door. It so happened that Mr. McGilp was engaged with a gentleman, but Jansen was received by his friend with marked *empressement*, and with some difficulty accommodated with a seat that would hold him. This was accomplished by means of a chair, which was ascertained first by experiment to be sound on the legs, though short of one arm, possibly with a view to admitting the broad back of the burly Dutchman.

McGilp's wig was this time not in his pocket, but hanging on a peg; and his coat was near it: the worthy painter feeling himself less embarrassed in this light conversational order, for the business on which he was engaged. He was also in his sitting-room, which looked upon some dingy leads and the back of a row of houses, not calculated to distract attention.

Mr. Dalrymple, who occupied the second chair in the room, the artist having dusted a box for his own accom-

modation, was a thin, absent-looking man, with pale cheeks, long sandy hair, and, strange to say, bright dark brown eyes, which gave to his face a brilliancy in contrast with his quiet, placid features. Your first impression might have been of a man thoughtful on any subject, but that on which he was momentarily engaged; and on worldly matters you would have been right. He was simple and unspeculative to a fault, totally unsuspecting of wrong, and generally wandering far from his subject in realms of thought more in accordance with his inclinations. But looking attentively at him you would have believed what was true—that in his profession he was zealous, truthful, impassioned, and clear-sighted; and he was so in matters to which he could be got to give a willing attention.

The circumstances of Margaret's early marriage had had this influence upon him; hence his visit to London, as unusual and as distasteful as a thing well could be; inconvenient as to pocket and time.

'A fortunate meeting,' said McGilp, introducing the two. Jansen bowed solemnly and respectfully to the minister of Knockmackiltie, who unfolded a long thin body with equal solemnity, and then resumed his seat. Not having apparently caught the name, Mr. Dalrymple remained passive in feature as in speech.

'This is the gentleman, Mr. Dalrymple, in whose daughter's marriage you have taken so much interest.' Mr. Dalrymple's whole face changed.

'It was a happy providence, Sir, that threw the "West of Scotland Gazette" in my way. We don't see much of newspapers in my part; just the "Sutherland Advertiser," and, maybe, the "Perthshire Chronicle" once in a way.'

'And you can give the desired information, Mr. Dalrymple?' inquired Jansen, with as little apparent feeling as if he was asking about the crops.

'Indeed, Sir, I can. I have the most vivid recollection of every circumstance. Margaret Jansen was staying with Mistress McWheedle for a month or six weeks in the year 1842.'

'True,' ejaculated Bernhard Jansen, calmly.

'If residence was wanted under the circumstances they

would both have fulfilled it; for Mr. Fellowes was then on a tour preparing for his university examination, and lived in the same parish, in the Isle of Skye, for almost as long a period as your daughter. I'm no lawyer, as my friend, Mr. McGilp, will testify, Mr. Jansen——'

'Deed, and you're not, Mr. Dalrymple; I take ye for an honest man.'

'But I've taken great pains to ascertain the facts, and everything was done in order. The parties were of age; for the young man brought me the certificates. His proper name, I find, was Falcon, but he was known under the name of Fellowes, George Fellowes, for a small property, said the McWheedles, that a relation of that name had left him. I saw him two years after in the same place.'

When Jansen heard the name of Falcon, he rose rather hastily from his seat, seemed about to speak, and then resumed his seat again. Suddenly he recollected himself, and said, 'Ay, true, true, Sir,—G. F.; he always signed himself G. F.' I don't know whether I mentioned before, that all the early notes which had been written by Margaret's lover to her, had from prudential, perhaps in the first instance dishonourable, motives, borne the initials only, many of which had been intercepted and destroyed by Bernhard Jansen.

'And do you mean to say, Mr. Dalrymple, that all the needful certificates and documents to prove a real and legitimate marriage are forthcoming?'

'Sir,' said that gentleman, 'you know the laws of marriage in Scotland are different from those of England. In both it is but a civil contract of its nature and necessity; but in this case I have ascertained, and can put into your hands the proofs of a marriage as binding as if it had been performed by a bishop in Westminster Abbey. They're at your service, and you shall have them whenever you'll ask for them.'

'You'll be wanting to see a writer or a lawyer,' said McGilp; 'and if you've ony money about you, you'd better leave it behind.'

Jansen took from his pocket a large memorandum-book, and after a short search produced an address which he read,—'Dryden and Swallow, Carlton Chambers,

Regent Street. It's an address that was sent me by a gentleman that has taken an interest in my grandson, and I'll call upon him, if Mr. Dalrymple will go with me. McGilp's no opinion of the lawyers.'

'The lawyers aint worse than the laws. There's scarcely one that a clever man couldn't break with impunity; and there's no doubt that the cultivation of intellect in this country gangs that gait. The better the lawyer the greater the rascal.'

'We must make use of the means that we've got, Mr. McGilp; and the expounders of bad laws may be very good men;' saying which Mr. Dalrymple took up his hat, and in a few minutes he and his burly friend were on their way to Mr. Dryden's chambers.

At a moment like this, Bernhard Jansen might have been forgiven for forgetting some of the marks of good breeding due to a stranger. He did, indeed, at first attempt to make some observations on the neighbourhood, its buildings, and the ordinary topics of the day, most likely to interest his companion: however, there is nothing very remarkable about Oxford Street into which they turned, or Jansen's mind was too preoccupied to continue its lucubrations on common subjects, for he found himself very quickly discussing the chances of proof of his daughter's marriage.

'Would the change of name make no difference, or create no difficulty?'

'Of English law,' said Mr. Dalrymple, 'on such a subject I cannot give an opinion. But in Scotland there can be no doubt of the legality of your daughter's marriage. They lived together after the ceremony in Scotland, and that, I believe, with the knowledge of the young lady's relations, and of their daughter, who witnessed the ceremony.'

Poor Jansen gave no marked sign of satisfaction notwithstanding, for at that time he could not help reverting to the deception which had been practised upon him by his wife: a cruel return, it can hardly be said, for his kindness and confidence in her; but a penalty which he scarcely felt called upon to pay for what in him was rather a constitutional harshness than a studied ill-treatment. Of course there are two sides of viewing every

question ; and we may presume that had Mrs. Jansen been still alive she would have had some explanation to give of the effect producible upon certain dispositions in women by persistent coldness or mistrust. The fact is, that consistent treatment of any kind is thrown away upon the majority of women, whose Virgilian characteristic of the '*varium et mutabile*' is incapable of meeting or appreciating it in a favourable form. It is pre-eminently the establishment of the three-cornered pegs in the round holes. Had Bernhard Jansen been sometimes indulgent and sometimes the reverse, there would have been a mutual confidence at propitious moments which might have saved him much temporary anxiety and half a life-time of woe. He was not a man to see this even now ; perhaps our readers may, with benefit to themselves.

By the time they reached Dryden's chambers near the Nelson column, they had fully discussed the subject ; and Jansen's object in seeking the lawyer was to confide to him the circumstances of the whole story, and request his assistance in giving the requisite information to Harold Falcon with the least possible publicity and the greatest possible despatch. He had determined upon this, feeling sure that Lord Hawkestone's introduction would insure him a hearing by the person most capable of advising him with regard to Harold. His feelings must be consulted, and through the lawyer seemed the simplest way of getting at them.

But a very plain and insurmountable obstacle presented itself to him. Upon inquiring for Mr. Dryden, that gentleman had gone into the country, his partner was out, and neither of his clerks knew his address. His absence was of uncertain length, depending on business of importance, and that was all that could be said. Many men, reticent by nature, find it impossible to turn from a step decided upon with deliberation. Their very firmness renders it difficult to forego the sort of pleasure they had anticipated : thus all apparent contradiction of character arises really from its consistency. Jansen had made up his mind to tell his story, and rather than be balked of his determination, he took hold of the arm of his companion, and poured into his astonished ear the

secret of the second marriage, his wife's treachery or fear, his daughter's infirmity of purpose in acting out so vicious a plot, Harold Falcon's natural and immediate desertion, Lord Hawkestone's accidental interest in the son, who had been presumed to be Harold Falcon's heir, and the new features which the case had assumed now that they knew Harold Falcon's position in the world. Of course it would be just as dishonest to have concealed these facts, were Harold still an unknown gentleman, supposed to be of no determined position; but it was doubly needful to disclose them now that so painful and distressing a point in the history was likely to be cleared up; and when the distinguished name and blood of a long line of ancestors flowing in Harold's veins would otherwise be tarnished by the adoption of a son whose birth would be presumed to be base, but whose claim, as born in wedlock, it would be hard to dispute. The scandal, too, that must be raised, and the feelings of innocent people, were facts worthy of consideration, and of immediate arrangement.

'Mr. Dalrymple, you must give me your time and your assistance for the day.'

'Willingly—the week, if you will; but it must be as short a week as you can make it.'

'It shall be as short as I can make it. Come with me to Grosvenor Square. We must try and find Captain Falcon.'





CHAPTER XLV.

MINISTRY TO A MIND DISEASED.

CAPTAIN FALCON was in town and at home. He was at that moment thinking of the manner in which he might introduce the subject at Hawkestone Castle. Like many men of his temperament he was still a moral coward ; and though he had made up his mind that the honest course to pursue would be to acknowledge his unhappy position to Lord Falconberg, the knowledge of his uncle's character made him now, as it had made him for years, anxious to postpone the fulfilment of his determination as long as possible. But his own feelings towards Lady Helen, and Lady Helen's feeling towards him, to say nothing of his altered relationship to the title, had put considerable pressure upon him during the last few months.

He was sitting gloomily in the small room which he used for business, and for the books, papers, sticks, riding and driving whips, old racing colours, and a favourite saddle, and other baccalaurian luxuries which he considered peculiarly his own. It was the room in which he and the old lord talked over improvements in the property since the death of Lord Hawkestone, and in which he was accustomed to smoke and chat with his old friends and brother Guardsmen, who came pretty constantly to see him whenever he and they were in town together.

He was now alone ; and in one of those doleful moods which we can scarcely be surprised at, even in a man of

Harold's temperament, under the peculiar circumstances of his case. He found solace for the moment in a cigar.

To one determination he had steadily adhered: as it happened, fortunately. It was this: to let no hint escape him to George Fellowes of his possibly legal claim upon him, before he had spoken to his uncle. It was due to the old man to avoid all irritating additions to the painful facts of the case, and it left him free to take advantage of all risks, chances, or accidents which might turn up. He was grateful to the Jansens that they had manifestly kept his secret, for he could not believe them ignorant of his great prospects, and of their own interests in them. He was very grateful to them for this. The temptation was so strong that it might have broken down any promise given or implied under different circumstances, however he might feel that he had been swindled into a marriage of which the bare recollection was so terrible that it made him blush even as he sat by himself in his gloomy den, at the back of the house in Grosvenor Square. 'I don't understand it,' thought Harold: 'old Jansen certainly was an honest man in his way; a liberal one as far as I was concerned even in his nefarious usuries; and he has been true to his word in letting me live or die without interference, notwithstanding the different aspect of the case. How, then, could he have been such an infernal scoundrel as to palm off——bah! it's horrible to think of.' Here he got up and walked once or twice up and down the little room. 'The girl, poor girl! I suppose women will do anything rather than——well! such a treacherous piece of business as that was better than lying dank and dead at the bottom of the Isis: and it must have come to that. I wasn't much better than she; for I was robbing her of everything, money, and all, and she only turned the tables on me: and after she had done the mischief she did try to repair it. But Jansen? of course he'd have sold his daughter—many people do,—but not such damaged goods as that, at all events. And if they do, why——' And here he smote the table so forcibly that it appeared to open the door of itself, and Mr. Wrench, **now** transferred to Harold as his confidential valet, stood on the sill.

'Oh, is that you, Wrench? come in, what is it?' Mr.

Wrench respectfully held a card on a waiter. 'I said you were engaged, but the gentlemen said it was of the greatest importance, and that they would wait or call again.'

When Harold read the name of Jansen the coincidence was striking enough to call the blood with rapidity into his face. He stood irresolutely for a minute or two, looking at the card with a dark and ominous frown.

'The gentlemen!' said he. 'Are there two then?'

'Yes, Sir, one a very tall, stout old man, the other a clergyman, I should think, Sir,—looks as if he'd come a-begging, Sir.'

'Ask Mr. Jansen to come in here alone. I'll see him alone first, Wrench.'

And Mr. Wrench went away, and shortly returned, bringing in the giant alone. He closed the door after him, and did not (as we are told in old plays that valets do) wait outside to listen to the conversation.

'Jansen,' said Harold, looking at the visitor with a flush still on his face.

'Captain Falcon,' said the visitor, but without approaching nearer.

'You had better take a seat,' and the old man took one, and leant forward in an embarrassed manner, while Harold still twirled the card in his hand.

'You desire to speak with me?'

'Yes,—on business that concerns you very nearly.'

'Probably, after so many years. Though I think we came to an understanding.'

'Circumstances have changed,' said Bernhard Jansen. 'Now,' thought the other, 'comes the reservation which I feared, the temptation has been too strong.'—'Circumstances have changed, or I never would have troubled you any more. Had you come to me, Captain Falcon, to claim my daughter as your wife, you would—well, it's well that you did not.'

'I don't see it in that light, if you are at liberty now to thrust her and her son upon me,' said Harold Falcon. 'Listen a moment, Jansen; it may yet be worth your while to wait. I am about consulting Lord Falconberg. It may be true that your daughter's son is legally my heir. It may be true. It is said that it is so; and if

that be the case I have no power to put him aside. I have not hitherto acted by him as if I would do so.' All this time Jansen sat with his mouth half open with his ready explanation ; but he had no opportunity given him of beginning it. 'But I have heard that possibly the presumption being overruled by proof, or by your daughter's own confession, or by other circumstantial evidence, the law will not support your claim.'

'Stop, stop, Captain Falcon, you have not heard me yet.'

'Nor you me. I say that this will be tried. I will move heaven and earth to prevent an alien from usurping a position, which will cut off the line of a long ancestry, to build a false nobility upon their name and property. I know what you would say : the exposure ! When I was a mere scion of a noble race, myself unknown, with many between me and my present position, I would have shielded your daughter from the results of her misconduct and your treachery, and borne in silence the disgrace which my own extravagance and recklessness had brought upon me. It is enough that I must live without any ties, but those which fortune has created for me. It has brought me nearer to those who were once far off from me. I did wrong, you have done worse ; and if shame and exposure await us, you must be content to take that much of it which the world will assuredly give you.' While Captain Falcon had been speaking, the perspiration had stood trembling on his forehead, and his hands had closed convulsively upon the card he held. As he concluded this part of his argument, he sat down in the arm-chair which he had occupied, and looked earnestly and sternly at the intruder.

Bernhard Jansen rose from his seat as Harold sat down. He was of a noble figure to look at, firm and colossal, with an open countenance and brow, his mouth and chin shadowed with a flowing gray beard and moustache. He kept his eyes bent, mildly, but immovably upon Harold as he advanced towards the table near which he sat.

'You should have heard me first, Sir. You have done me an injustice. I knew your position when you married my daughter. We drove a bargain, wrong enough, in all conscience, for us not to abuse one another now. But

appearances are against me. Do you believe I am truthful? that I would not willingly say what is not true, though I sold her with some thousands to buy your name for her, such as it was?' Harold half rose involuntarily, but Jansen continued, 'Your pardon, Captain Falcon; you have been hard upon me. I forgot myself. Do you believe I would speak falsely?'

'No, no; not in so many words,' replied Harold honestly enough.

'Then I declare to you, upon my honour, I knew nothing of that which must have provoked your just scorn. I believed my daughter to be giddy, wilful, inconstant, but pure and innocent in the world's sense. I knew her to be beautiful, and to be able to supply the wants and necessities of a ruined man. I knew nothing more till it was too late.' Harold listened, strange to say, with a pleasure in believing that Jansen was speaking the truth. 'You have just talked of exposure. We did not dread it; for I declare to you that nothing should have induced us to make one single claim upon you. My daughter would have gone to her grave under the name she has chosen to assume and to give to her son. Her last deceit was practised upon you; and it was so wicked that she repented once and once for all. She will be no Lady Falconberg, nor her son Lord Hawkestone.' Here Jansen paused for breath.

'But, Mr. Jansen, as my wife's son——'

'He is not your son——'

'Granted; but you are not ignorant——'

'I am not ignorant of much, Sir, which you must learn. Margaret Jansen is not your wife, nor is her son your heir.'

'By your forbearance,' said Harold with some excusable irritation, thinking that for it he must be indebted to the man, and that even that would not remove the bar to his happiness.

'By the law, honestly, truly, legally, she is not your wife, and never has been.' Here it was Harold's turn to look puzzled, which he did, staring at Jansen for an explanation. And it came slowly and deliberately, word for word, with an apparent effort to make it as clear as it could be made. 'She never was your wife for she was then married to another man.'

There followed upon this the explanation, which we need not repeat to the reader. It has already been given, and bore no marked difference in its manner of relation. It was interrupted by Harold Falcon, by expressions of surprise, by doubts, by questions. At length, when fairly old, with some apprehension for the evidence of this youthful intelligence, then it was that Bernhard Jansen proposed to introduce his friend, of whose very existence Harold Falcon had become oblivious. Nothing could be clearer than that gentleman's corroboration. He stated names, places, names, and dates, which placed beyond all doubt the one grand fact that Margaret Jansen had been married, some twenty years before, to a gentleman calling himself Fellowes, in the west of Scotland; that they had lived there together afterwards, apparently by the permission of her relatives, and that at length they had disappeared from the stage together.

'And in whose hands do you propose to leave the roofs of this marriage?' said Harold, 'and what steps will be necessary to re-establish your daughter in her privileges—to make your grandson his father's heir?'

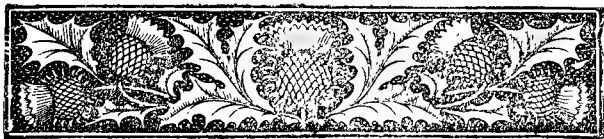
'Our object is to do an act of justice to you, as well as to her, Captain Falcon. It is desirable for all to avoid exposure as much as possible. Lord Hawkestone gave me the address of his lawyer, Mr. Dryden, long ago, not foreseeing how much I might stand in need of his assistance. Shall I go to him? He knows something of our business; too much to be partially trusted. Will he act honourably in the steps we may want to take, and prudently, for the discovery of this man, if necessary? I can't say that it will be necessary, but should it be so.'

Harold paused for a minute. He didn't like Dryden; but he knew of nothing to his disadvantage. It was a great thing to prevent exposure for himself and his family, and to select another would be a certain means of extending the knowledge, and probably of irritating Mr. Dryden. Increased confidence must necessarily bind him closer to them, at all events secure him from active enmity. 'As you have already called upon Mr. Dryden should recommend your seeking any professional advice you may want from him.' Here the door opened once more, and Mr. Wrench presented a telegram to Harold,

then a less common means of communication than it is now.

‘A boy is waiting in a cab at the door for you to sign the receipt, Sir,’ said Mr. Wrench, not even looking at Messrs. Jansen and Dalrymple, though having vague conjectures of Churchbuilding or Curates’ Funds in his mind.

Harold had looked at the despatch, and his face showed symptoms of agitation. His colour went and came, and when he had desired Wrench to put some luncheon on the table, he added, ‘And put a few things into a portmanteau for me, and call a cab as soon as it is done. I’m going down to Hawkestone immediately. You’ll excuse me, gentlemen, I can be no assistance to you at this moment. Better go to Mr. Dryden, as you had already determined upon doing. The cab, Wrench,’ said he, twenty minutes later, after he had swallowed a mouthful. ‘See that these gentlemen have everything. If I want you I’ll write or telegraph. Jansen,’ and he took him on one side. ‘Establish these facts beyond all doubt, at once. There’s my address. See Dryden. Find the man, this Mr. Fellowes, and the world need be none the wiser. Spare no expense for all honest purposes. But for all our sakes let us avoid exposure. We have suffered enough without that.’ Then he got into his cab and drove to the station. On his way he took the telegram out of his pocket. It was very laconic, very vague, very inexplicit but to Harold himself. It was from Hawkestone Castle—from Lady Helen Falcon to Harold Falcon, Esq. ‘Come to me directly.’ Nothing more, nothing less. She knew he would come—yes, any distance at any time. The case was clear. Lord Falconberg was dead, or stricken beyond recovery.



CHAPTER XLVI.

HAROLD AT HOME.

THE effect produced upon Harold's mind by the explanation of Bernhard Jansen was strong enough to struggle with the interest excited by the receipt of the telegram. For the first time for something like twenty years he began to feel independent of a tie, which bound him to mystery, disgrace, and disappointment. It was a great and happy moment. In that moment he thought of sharing his secret with his cousin, Lady Helen. That it ought to be told to her, and to his uncle, he had no doubt. The acknowledgment of his own folly was painful, very painful; but it must be done; and in his worst days Harold was never deficient in that sort of justice which entailed punishment upon himself. Many men try to shirk it: Harold knew the cost incurred in it, and paid the penalty.

He had some doubts to resolve on his journey down and they occupied his time, not pleasantly if profitably.

First, was he really free, legally as well as morally, from this marriage which had entailed so much misery upon him? Secondly, if so, upon hearing the details of his former life, what would be the state of Lady Helen's feelings for him? It is so easy for women to forgive indiscretion, so hard to forgive deliberate heartlessness. Thirdly, if Lord Falconberg were ill or dying, how far was it necessary or expedient to make to him disclosures which would most undoubtedly accelerate his end? By the time he reached Hawkestone he had not resolved

these doubts, and it is impossible to deny that they were very hard ones.

As he went down that afternoon, a certain gentleman with whom we have become acquainted went up. The trains met, and stood beside each other for a few minutes, but Harold Falcon and Mr. Dryden did not see each other. Harold was conveyed on his way, and Mr. Dryden returned to London, in time to receive Mr. Jansen's card and to fix an interview for the morrow without fail. We must revert to it in its place : at present we follow Harold Falcon to the Castle.

When he reached the lodge gates of the park it was dusk, and the first thing that struck him on reaching the Castle was the absence of light in the windows. As soon however as the bell sounded through the lofty hall, a light showed itself, and Harold was received by the servants with the same alacrity as usual. Still it struck him that some feeling of solemnity pervaded the household ; and the absence of the great chandelier, which was always lighted in the hall, added to his conviction. He had no time, had he felt any inclination, to question the servant in attendance, for Lord Falconberg's own man, Mr. Markham, met him at the foot of the great staircase, and immediately preceded him to the library.

'Markham, where's Lady Helen?'

'She's in her own room, Sir ; perhaps you've not heard on the road nor at the lodge gates, Lord Falconberg is——' Harold knew now quite well what Mr. Markham was going to say.

'No, I heard nothing at the lodge gates, they were open. You mean my uncle is given over?'

'Your uncle, my lord, is dead.' Markham, who had lived with the late earl for some years, felt as much as dependants do feel on such occasions. But earls are like kings and do not die generally, and households don't disperse ; and in this case there was some one to succeed, and Markham remembered that. It was the first time Harold had been called 'my lord,' and it struck upon his ear somewhat harshly, grated just a little. To say he was astonished is not true. The fact is, he had thought of the possibility coming down.

'Dead, Markham ! I hardly thought that.' It's custom-

ary with the best of men to say this. 'I had no intelligence, and fancied it might be sudden illness, paralysis, or something of that kind. Was it very sudden?'

'It was very sudden, my lord;' Markham never forgot anything. 'Doctor Spence is in the house now; but he was dead long before the doctor came.'

'I should like to see him, Markham.'

'Doctor Spence, my lord, or——?'

'Doctor Spence, of course,' said Harold, whom we must now call Lord Falconberg.

Doctor Spence was the country practitioner who had always attended at the Castle. He was in reality an M.D., but a good practice which he inherited from his father, as an apothecary, had restrained his ambition; and he continued to exercise his calling, beloved and respected, as thousands of such men are, and with talents and experience fitted for a higher sphere. In every case the family physician must be a friend, and there is no class of professional men in the world so worthy of the position; no men who so rarely do discredit to the trust reposed in them. The case with your country practitioner is not so frequent, but would be equally admissible. There is a kindness or generosity amongst them, which is only known to those who have the opportunity of thoroughly testing them. The medical student as depicted by Mr. Dickens and his besotted followers, is not an amiable man. His pictures may be true or may be false. Our experience does not lie with the Bob Sawyers and the Benjamin Allens of the school, but it acknowledges publicly and gratefully the many kindnesses of those who are always ready to soothe pain, mental or bodily, among the poor as among the rich, and that with equal attention, and at a minimum of remuneration for their education, labour, and expenses.

'This is sad intelligence for you, Harold,' said Doctor Spence, who had known him from childhood, and had formed a tolerable estimate of his character.

'It is, doctor; not altogether unexpected. Lady Helen's telegram gave me sufficient cause for apprehension. I thought, however, I might still find my good old uncle alive. How did it really happen at last?'

'You know his friend Dryden was here, and with him at the last moment?'

'I did not know of Dryden's visit. What was its object?'

'Ah, that I can't say. It might have been prudent or imprudent to have transacted business of any kind in your uncle's state. A mere ordinary subject, or the settlement of his affairs in any way, was not likely to have produced the catastrophe; extraordinary news affecting him, on the other hand, was very likely to have produced it. He was an old man, had lived out his threescore years and ten; had had his sorrows, losses, and lately a very severe one. He was an active man, and as far as active pursuits are concerned a healthy one; but he has been long subject to disease of the heart; and sudden shock, I could almost say surprise, was attended with risk. Now, Harold, do you know of anything which could have probably produced such a result?'

Until that very morning Harold did not know of anything; but Jansen had opened his eyes to the fact that Dryden knew a portion of his own history. Was it not possible, even probable, that he had come down to consult with Lord Falconberg or to inform him of the result of some investigations of his own?

'Yesterday I did not, to-night I do. Though why Dryden should have come down to talk about it, I can't tell. It's a curious thing, Doctor Spence. Dryden did know something which I have been more than once prevented from telling my uncle, lately on account of his health. But I had determined just now that I ought to tell him; and have possibly been saved from the pain which Dryden feels now at having done so.' Harold then did the best thing he could do. He took the doctor entirely into his confidence. 'And how about my cousin Lady Helen?'

'Ah, you mustn't say a word to her just now. It can make no earthly difference to her if she never knows a word about it. They may find this first husband, and then there will be no necessity for exposing the proofs,' said Doctor Spence. 'There's plenty of time before you. You'll go to her now, I suppose. She wants to see you.'

Before I go, Harold, however, I must shake hands with you as the new Lord Falconberg. I have lost an old and kind friend, for whom I shall grieve; let me be glad in welcoming an old friend in his place.' Saying which the good doctor was about to take his leave.

'But, Doctor Spence, tell me how it all happened; I wish to spare Helen all the pain of talking about the subject that I can. She has had her father only to depend upon since Hawkestone's death, and will feel the loss terribly.' The doctor might have his own notions about the only friend on whom Lady Helen had to depend, but he replied to the first part of the question:

'Dryden came down here to lunch, was with the late peer and Lady Helen for half-an-hour. They walked about the garden, chatting cheerfully enough. Then the two went into his lordship's room, where he transacts business generally. They had been there ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, when the bell rang violently: Markham rushed in, and found his master fainting, at his last gasp. Lady Helen was sent for, but he was unable to recognise her; and long before I got here he was dead. Nothing could have saved his life. He died, undoubtedly of a sudden spasm of the heart. Dryden would have waited to see you, but unfortunately he was telegraphed for to town on business, having been away longer than he intended, and left reluctantly. I have remained with Lady Helen. She wants to see you, I know; but perhaps you had better ring for her maid. Good-night, my lord.'

Mrs. Prince was a good woman of forty years of age. Not one of your dapper, neat, pretty women, all ribbons, and smiles, and cast-off caps and finery: nothing at all like your operatic soubrette, or the flighty little flirt that fills the post in a fashionable novel or light comedy, but a handsome, well-dressed, and staid person of forty years of age, devotedly attached to the house of Falconberg in general, and to her mistress in particular, with whom she had lived ever since she was out. Mrs. Prince came down to Harold at once, from the melancholy occupation of looking out some black dresses from her lady's wardrobe, until proper mourning could be prepared.

Mrs. Prince had been crying, as was natural. She had

already managed to mount a black silk dress, and a cap with black ribbons in it: a very fine and broadly-bordered handkerchief was in her hand. Harold inquired after Lady Helen, and Mrs. Prince gave a satisfactory account of her. She was not a woman herself of extraordinary feeling, nor did she pretend to it. Neither did she pretend to it for her mistress, any more than for herself: so she said,

‘Lady Helen is more herself than she was, my lord. She bears up against it pretty well. It was sudden: and though her father died in her ladyship’s arms, as you may say, he was unable to speak to her. Dr. Spence stayed with her till you came down, my lord, and he left her more cheerful. She’ll be very glad to see you, Mr. Harold; it always did her good.’ And after this terrible slip of the tongue for a well-conducted woman, Mrs. Prince applied her handkerchief to her eyes, not, as in many cases, to conceal what was not there, but to stop an honest tear or two which made their way in favour of her mistress.

Harold would willingly have gone to her before; but, with the hesitating love of a man of his age, he feared to intrude. You see, he had been in love with his cousin for fifteen years. For fifteen years he had never dared to breathe it to a living soul. Yet all that time circumstances had prevented him from telling a tale, which would have possibly broken off close relations with her family, and certainly have spared Lord Hawkestone and Lord Falconberg many a vain hope of what was not to be fulfilled in their days. The number of times he had made up his mind to cry quits with his conscience, and tell them his story, and had been stopped by untoward circumstances, was marvellous: even allowing for his own natural vacillation. This very day he had made up his mind to make a clean breast of it: and then he hears the joyful truth, and dares not tell that even. At the very moment Lord Falconberg dies, and Helen is certainly not in a position to listen to any such confession.

‘Wait, wait, wait,’ says the new lord to himself. ‘I’m sick of waiting.’ And with these thoughts he was ushered into the Lady Helen’s presence.

I have said that Lady Helen Falcon was very beautiful.

It was a beauty, too, so peculiarly English as to be enhanced by time. Character and intelligence marked every feature, which yet had not lost the freshness of youth. She had made no change in her dress, less thoughtful on such a subject than her own maid. It was always handsome and rich in material, affecting nothing of girlhood: it was so now; but as usual, of rather sombre colouring, contrasting well with her clear, pale complexion, and the delicate tracery of her features.

‘Harold,’ and she rose, and held out both her hands to her cousin. He took them both in his, and with an almost involuntary movement drew her towards him and kissed her forehead. ‘It is very good of you to have come so soon; but I was sure you would do so. I was so entirely alone when it happened; the duchess and Lady Di left us last week, and, excepting Doctor Spence, I have no neighbour here.’ While Lady Helen said this, her eyes were filled with tears, but she behaved as women of sense and feeling do behave on such occasions; she used the former to keep in check the latter: and succeeded.

‘Of course I came at once. I could only conclude by your telegram that something of this kind was the matter. Doctor Spence has told me all.’ This he said to save Helen the pain of repeating what he knew already. ‘Tomorrow I think you must let me write to your aunt, or will you go to the duchess, Helen? You can’t stay here. Let me write to your aunt.’ And then they two, loving one another, and having loved for years, discussed the convenience of Lady Helen’s movements, as though their hearts were not bursting; the one to console, the other to be consoled. When men err they never know the extent to which their error may reach. It is like a stone dropt into the water, whose first ripples only catch the eye, and as the circles increase in size, they so decrease in strength, that few heed them after the first plunge.

It was soon decided between them, that for the present Lady Helen should go to her aunt’s, and that she could easily there make what arrangements suited her best for her permanent residence. Not yet knowing the contents of Lord Falconberg’s will, there was no necessity to discuss that point. At length Helen said to him,

‘Harold, I should like to see my dear father once more.’ A few tears very silently ran down Lady Helen’s cheeks. Doctor Spence had recommended her not to try herself just yet by so severe an ordeal, so had Mrs. Prince; but neither the one nor the other knew her as Harold did. If she desired it, he believed it to be best.

‘Come then, Helen, let us go together,’ and taking her by the hand he led her from the room in which they had been sitting. He lit a single candle himself, on the landing of the great staircase, that there might be no interference of the household; and in another minute they were in the late lord’s room, where he was now lying, the empty image of his former self.

Harold and Lady Helen looked long and silently upon the face of their lost friend and protector: she at first without a tear; while through his mind ran the scenes in which they three had borne parts from his boyhood. His ill-fated marriage, which was no marriage; the late lord’s wishes, so well understood by him though unexpressed; Hawkestone’s long and sincere friendship, and his own many years of reticence on the subject which lay so near all their hearts. It takes long to say that all this had come from Harold Falcon’s youthful extravagance; it was not many seconds in asserting its rights in his mind. Less quickly, but not less surely came the suggestion that perhaps his uncle might still have been alive but for Dryden’s visit; and a very vivid suspicion of its purport and the irreparable mischief done presented itself. When he thought of his Cousin Helen in connection with these things, he was for a moment unable to control himself, and despite her presence Harold wept, as he had not wept since he was a child.

They stood side by side, and Helen felt rather than saw Harold’s tears rising. She felt his struggles to suppress them, and the passionate tightening of his hold upon her hand, until he put his own hand to his face and his self-upbraiding broke forth in a half-suppressed groan. Then Helen looked up at him, and as he shook with agitation, thinking almost aloud ‘My punishment has been too great,’ she disengaged her hand, and putting them both upon his shoulders laid her head upon his bosom, while he drew her nearer to himself, and over the corpse of the

late earl whispered such words of comfort as a life of love now first finding utterance could suggest. When at length, having knelt together by the side of the old man for some time, they rose, there was a calm, not unallied to happiness, in Helen's face, for she knew she would not be alone in the world so long as Lord Falconberg was alive.





CHAPTER XLVII.

SWEEPING OUT THE CORNERS.



R. DRYDEN returned to town, and the first consideration was to secure an interview with Bernhard Jansen. It was not long in being brought to a close, for at eleven o'clock on the day after his arrival, and while Harold was making arrangements for the late Lord Falconberg's funeral, and for Lady Helen's removal from the house of mourning, he and his daughter were ushered into a private room in Carlton Chambers. A long and very interesting conversation there took place on the subject of Margaret's first marriage, and the end arrived at by Dryden was one which gave unmixed satisfaction to them all. They were all actuated by like motives. Dryden's own wish was clear enough. Actuated by the mammon of unrighteousness, but restrained by a common regard for reputation, he was urged to give an acute mind to the furtherance of the desire of the reigning Lord Falconberg. He had acted with no love for Harold Falcon, but with an intention to do what was right by the late lord and his family. Even a live dog is better than a dead lion; but a live lion! *a fortiori*. Lord Falconberg and he must still be friends. He meant to secure himself. All great people, every great house, had its skeleton. The business of the lawyer was to keep it under lock and key.

Jansen, to be truthful on that subject, cared for nothing but the establishment of his daughter's marriage. If he had ever been ambitious for her, it was not after the fashion of this world's ambition. That his grandson

should be the legitimate son of his daughter and her husband would satisfy him, and he was one of those practical men that would make the best of irremediable evil. He did not even speculate on whether that husband would be found, and whether, when found, he would be worth the trouble of the search. Could his previous existence and Dalrymple's facts be proved to his own conviction? That was to him the great point, and there seemed to be no doubt about it now.

Margaret's feelings were of the complex order, and no wonder. She remembered her first lover, the man for whom she had sacrificed everything but her bare self-respect taken at its lowest point: and she remembered him still with affection. That feeling of affection increased with every moment which brought her nearer to the possibility of seeing him again. Her life, since his desertion, had been a dream—a vivid, wakeful dream, a sort of existence apart from that which should have been hers. A parenthetic life from the days of her first marriage to the time when a hope of return to the old and proper one had slowly dawned upon her. She had sacrificed to her willful and wayward love, her home, her father, her truth, and so far her reputation; but not in its lowest sense. She knew she had fallen far from her high estate of maidenly reserve and purity, but she had not fallen below recovery. And though it had been delayed for a long time, it had begun to reappear. If her father had doubted her for years, he did so no longer. Accident had revealed what a long search, necessarily carried on with caution, had not been able to discover.

Her feelings for Lord Falconberg, mixed up as he had been in her fate, were those of kindly indifference. So much the better. She need never see him more. He had acted in all the unfortunate occurrences of her life with gentlemanly consideration, even with magnanimity, as she thought. Harold himself knew that his motives would not bear conscientious scrutiny. He had done what he had with a sincere desire to bury the whole in oblivion for his own sake; and at the time he had no notion of the penalty he would have to pay. He had rushed into the arms of an ill-fated marriage recklessly, he had withdrawn from it, naturally, coldly, cursing his ill-luck,

Jansen's cruelty, and Margaret's dishonesty. He had just managed to be a trifle lenient, because she had refused to allow him to adopt as his own the child of another man.

Dryden, if an unprincipled man, was a clear-sighted one. He talked over some of these matters and saw them all. He had seen something more. Since his interview with George Falcon he had had strange doubts come over him, as to that cynic's career. He put a great many things together after that interview; and compounded them with that gentleman's suggestive questions as to the possibility of his marriage, of his being already married, of heirship, kinship, and other matters of a like kind. He knew something too of human nature. He did not believe in George Falcon's philosophy, in his indifference to women, in his absorption, in his exclusive acquisitiveness. He saw a crotchety mind, not a hardened nature, in his eccentricities. He knew that almost everyone had a soft place for a woman, if the right woman was to be met with; and he saw no reason why George Falcon should not have made a secret marriage as well as Harold. It was George's own suggestion, and since then the lawyer had been reasoning on it.

'Now, Mr. Jansen, will you put on your hat and walk with me to Temple Bar?' Jansen, having confidence in the lawyer, assented at once.

'And my daughter?' said he, wondering whether she was to be sent back to Keyser's Hotel or to be kept in Mr. Dryden's sitting-room.

'Shall go with us,' replied he, after a moment's consideration. 'Tomkins, send the office boy round the corner for a four-wheeler.'

Having threaded the omnibuses and upturned paving-stones about St. Clement's and Somerset House without accident, they reached the Temple, down which they walked, the cabman having bitten the half-crown to ascertain its value before giving the change.

At the bottom of George Falcon's staircase they met with a woman, whose bonnet, even for six years ago, was more outrageous in its size than the present fashion for its smallness.

'My good woman, I wish to leave this lady down stairs, if I can place her anywhere for ten minutes. If

not she must go up with us.' The old woman opened a door on the left, on which was painted Mr. Serjeant O'Butterton, saying, with a quickly dropped courtesy which she as quickly picked up again,

'The lady is welcome to these rooms, Sir, as long as is convenient. The Serjeant's down at the 'sises, and won't be back till the day after to-morrow.'

Jansen and his legal adviser walked up stairs, and knocked at Mr. George Falcon's door. The name struck Jansen as odd, but he said nothing, possibly thinking the more.

'Mr. Falcon will be in in ten minutes or less, Sir,' said his clerk. 'He desired me to say so if anyone called ;' at the same time he ushered them into the barrister's room and left them.

They had been in the room a few minutes, when one took up the paper and the other a law book and began to read. Dryden got tired of his book, and walking up to the shelves he took down and opened another, which by its back professed to treat of a subject at that moment rather interesting to him, 'On the law of marriage in Scotland.' He turned over a page or two, and was about closing it after reading an opinion which he wanted, when from between the leaves there dropped upon the ground what looked like a piece of paper. On picking it up it proved to be, however, a piece of ivory which had fallen out of its envelope.

Lawyers are perhaps less curious in matters irrelevant than other people. Their ingenuity and curiosity is usually kept for state occasions to be paid for ; seldom aired for nothing. Dryden however may be excused for an almost involuntary breach of that article of faith. The back of this thin piece of ivory was presented to his eye as he picked it up, and he incontinently turned it round.

A lawyer too ought not to be given to sudden surprises. I have seen such in court on the face of Serjeant Buzfuz or Mr. Starleigh, but I knew they were paid for —just as I have seen old Mr. Kean tear his laced collar in Sir Giles Overreach, or Mr. Macready grow livid at the sight of a dagger, but I knew they were paid for it. Now Mr. Dryden's present look of astonishment was

perfectly gratuitous, he was neither selling a sentiment nor acting a part. First he started, then he looked closely at the ivory, then he took up his double eye-glasses, and then he walked round to Mr. Jansen, and throwing the thing down on a leading article of the *Times*, arrested the Dutchman's attention. He went through the same pantomime as his companion, losing colour as he continued his examination, until it returned to him again, when he put his first question, 'Where did you get this?'

'Out of that book. It's your daughter?'

'It is,' said Jansen, 'when she was young. Strange she should have changed so little,' and Jansen continued to look at it.

'Where did it come from?' said Dryden again.

'I painted it myself,' replied the other.

'You did? humph,' ejaculated the lawyer, 'then how the devil did it get here?'

As this question was not readily answered, and could only be answered by two people on earth, both held their peace. At length Jansen replied, 'I missed it years ago when we were in Oxfordshire, but thought nothing more about it. I presume that Margaret can tell,' and the old man was proceeding towards the door. At the moment a latchkey was placed in it, it turned on its hinges, and Margaret stood before her father leaning on the arm of a man he had never seen before. Dryden had; and addressed him at once as George Falcon.

The confusion incident to such a meeting, if great, was short-lived. George Falcon stood up before the lawyer and his new client, and acknowledged Margaret as his wife. It was he who had known her and loved her at Woodstock, who had persuaded her to marry him in Scotland, who had been assisted by the girl's own mother in deceiving her father, who had left her after a time to come to England. It was George Falcon who had written to her as G. F., but whose letters were intercepted by Bernhard Jansen, the answers to which were destroyed and the inquiries after whom were unsuccessful by reason of his assumed name. Then he came again into Oxfordshire; but his wife and all trace of her was gone. No one knew whither; where or how could her husband

apply, and yet preserve the incognito on which his fortune and his position appeared to depend? But when at length the fortune came, and he might have proclaimed his marriage with the dread of nothing worse than a sneer, where was the wife for whom he would willingly have allowed the world to laugh? Nowhere: not to be found. He tried Nuremberg, to no purpose. He tried Scotland, to just as little. As to the names or abode of his wife's relations he knew no more of them than the man in the moon. Then came the calls, not of ambition, but of avarice; and he had learnt to forget what he no longer regarded as within his reach. Suddenly he had found it again, and in what a singular place,—in the chambers of his friend Mr. Serjeant O'Butterton, of the Inner Temple.

As his clerk had said, he was expected home every minute, and as he returned within a few minutes of the Jansens' arrival he would certainly have saved his clerk's credit, but for one circumstance. Calling loudly to O'Butterton, and receiving no answer, he kicked open the door, which was ajar, and entered. Seeing only a lady with her back to him, he was about to retire.

But the voice had attracted Margaret's attention; and she turned round suddenly, looking fixedly at the speaker. She advanced towards a table, which stood between them, and as every vestige of colour left her cheeks, she pronounced simply, somewhat uncertainly, his name—'George Fellowes.' It was he: there he stood, after so many years, silent and confounded. In a moment, however, he recovered himself, and walking round to her and taking both her hands into his, he said, 'You are my wife.' There was no strong emotion in the manner of his words or the tone of his voice; but he drew her slowly but firmly towards him, and as he kissed her he felt her tears dropping rapidly from her eyes. Then he placed her in a chair, and leaning over her affectionately, gave her time for recovery.

Neither of these persons were by nature demonstrative, and by the time she had explained the accident which had brought her there, and the presence of her father and Mr. Dryden up stairs, they were enabled to rally sufficiently to leave the room together.

'Come with me, Margaret ; we have been many years in finding one another. From to-day we are one.' He drew her arm within his arm, and in that manner they had met her father.

Is the reader surprised that the whole catastrophe should have thus passed over, without more tears, more fainting, more sentiment? He does not take into consideration the character or circumstances of the man. Love, that passionate devotion of youth, which makes up for all deficiencies, and outstrips the strength of manhood, had been dying within both for years. The two had been to each other as though they were not ; and lower instincts had asserted themselves in the man. He was awake again ; but it would take time to bring back the old feeling, if it ever could revive. He knew that he could devote himself to his old love for the rest of his life : he could make her some amends for the long years of accidental neglect : they would be now better lovers than two-thirds of those whose sentiment had settled down into an ordinary respectability ; whose affection had smoothed and polished itself into an indulgence of mutual prejudice.

He was a quick-witted person, and saw before him more happiness than he had dreamed of even in the acquisition of his darling gold. She was going to rescue him from that meanness, and to perform the conventional mission of woman, in giving him a worthier crown than that with which he would have decorated his own head when it should have become hoary with age, or bowed with increasing infirmity. He had sense enough and feeling enough left to see all this ; and he was thankful, as a shipwrecked mariner ought to be. They had lost much time ; but, though their day had been clouded, their sunset might yet be bright and cheerful, if they would but care to make it so.

Details are stupid when they have only to relate the natural and inseparable accidents of such a termination to a story. Of course they went abroad, of course they looked for peace and quiet and retirement. Time enough to return to England when business or policy should remind them of those ties which, in George Falcon's case, it was impossible to ignore. Was not he his cousin's natural heir ? was not his son a possible future Lord Falconberg ?

It is but justice to say that he did not forget this, though little was said at first upon the subject. Lord Falconberg himself was left in no ignorance of the turn that affairs had taken : and when it was generally known that George Falcon, barrister-at-law, had made the most of a mésalliance, contracted when young in opposition to his family ; that he had been married twenty years, that he had a son grown up, and had left his profession, with a very good income derivable from his exertions in it, there remained but little curiosity in this busy world to know anything more about it.

If we did but consider of how very little consequence we are to such a world as that in which we live, in the great battle of life where everybody is fighting for himself, it would be better for some of us. Smith thinks it would be a sad thing to retire to a smaller house, or to put down his carriage, because Jones would talk about it. Jones would talk about it. He would crack a pawn at a Greenwich dinner, and say, 'The Smiths have come to grief. I'm sorry for Smith : he was a deuced good fellow ;' to which Robinson would add, 'So was his wife :' and they would never be mentioned again.

George Falcon owed no man anything ; and his fashionable acquaintances had not heard of him for years.





CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE LAST CORNER SWEEP.



CANNOT insult people by asking them to wade through the details of a twelvemonth with me. Lord Falconberg had settled quietly and easily into his new seat. I don't know how I should have described him as springing suddenly from debt and difficulty into an earldom and vast fortune ; but his gradations from lieutenant and captain in the Guards to pauper, gambler, ruined spendthrift, freedman (at a terrible expense), and back by slow degrees of respectability to friend of the family, kinsman, right-hand-man, and presumptive heir, makes the supposition of his graceful accession easy of conception. The year passed as usual. The disease in the grouse appeared as usual ; it's bound to do so to the consternation of landlords and disappointment of tenants. The ministerial dinner, as of old. Whitebait the size of prawns, and prawns the size of whitebait : but what should a patriot know about eating and drinking ? There were the complimentary speeches which we all address to our opponents on the hustings, and off them. Lord Falconberg went to Leicestershire for the winter, and spent the frosts with his Cousin Helen at old Lady Julia's. Why not ? Where should a man spend a frost but on slippery ground ? The covers, too, were shot, not only at Hawkestone but elsewhere ; and the true sportsmen were unusually indignant, as was natural, when the one bags twelve brace and the other forty. The true sportsman died with the introduction of

Australian gold, railroads, and breech-loaders. *Requiescat in pace.*

ευφημει τον ολωλοτ' υποσχως εν χθονι κεισθω·

Clarke's Irish Melodies.

I'm afraid there's a forcible government of an accusative in this line; but for want of a better, let it be.

Spring came, and the London season. Titiens was singing now, not Grisi: Mario struggled on, and made a fine run of it. Things were altered since last year. The Atlantic telegraph had failed, and was not yet successfully laid. Overend, Gurney, and Company was yet—well! what shall I call it?—solvent—that won't offend anybody, but those who have lost by them: and the Crasham and Turn-over yet shielded itself behind an ominous director, Morton Peto. All sorts of things had happened in the Derby: a three-year-old looked so like a four-year-old, that he was ordered to be examined—clearly a gross insult to his owner: and a new line of boxes had been added to the Ascot grand-stand, that what Tom Tug calls 'the great city ladies' might have a view. Oh! for the times when there was no stand, no boxes, no lawn, no crowd, no dust, noise, nor betting-ring, and when we walked up and down between the races 'to see and to be seen.' There's a great moral in the mercenary showman's advice: 'Stand down and don't breathe upon the glasses, you young rascals what hasn't got any money in your pockets for to pay, and let the sweet little dears, with two-pence in their hands, come up.' It's the two-pence that does everything in this world, whatever blue-blood may think of the matter.

The villa in Egmont was to be put into perfect order on the first of June, for Lord Falconberg and his bride were coming to pass the honeymoon at his cottage. The *Times* and the *Post* had announced his marriage for the twenty-fifth, and they were right. On that morning St. George's, Hanover Square, was full to overflowing, for though the world knew nothing of the real circumstances of the case, as the reader now has them for the first time, it had got up a curiosity to see the man who was once sixth from the succession, and the lovely cousin who,

then almost a child, had waited till he was in a position to marry her. 'What self-control, what prudence, what constancy!' says Mrs. Slowtop. 'What nonsense, what cowardice, what want of faith!' says Mrs. Quicksilver. 'Why didn't they marry before?' says Miss Crumpet. 'Why the devil do they marry now?' says old Crusty.

'They're the handsomest couple in London,' said the Duchess of Merrivale, as she watched them posting away from old Lady Julia's house in Brook Street for Egmont.

'For their age, dear,' said her daughter, Lady Elizabeth, herself a beauty and about to be married to Farina, who was much her senior.

'For any age, my dear,' said her mother. 'Lady Helen's is a beauty that a few years could never impair. She'll be young till she's sixty; and as to Lord Falconberg, he's younger than Farina, and the handsomest man in London.' This was a little savage on the part of the duchess, but it was true, and duchesses do not like to be taken to task even by their own daughters. At least her Grace of Merrivale did not.

Egmont was in a state bordering on bewilderment. It had submitted to every sort of fashionable tyranny but to that of a living member of the peerage in its immediate circle. Now he was come, with his countess, to his own villa, which had belonged to him when he was simply Captain Falcon, nobody at all. This was nuts for Egmont to crack; and as Egmont went up to London by the train every morning, it was likely that it would be made to feel its importance. 'And how is the earl?'

'So you've Lord Falconberg among you.' 'Lady Falconberg's a charming person; my uncle knew her grandmother, years ago, of course.' 'Not in her bridal bonnet on Sunday! that's rather extraordinary, isn't it?' 'Quite put Sir Samuel's nose out of joint, I suppose,' but this was said confidentially.

From that time Lord Falconberg made Egmont an occasional home for the countess during the season. It was a pleasant change from London, and they made themselves thoroughly beloved in the parish. Lady Helen's *ritualistic* habits of visiting the sick and clothing the poor without ostentation, that is, in her usual silks and satins and five-guinea bonnets, had not deserted her,

and though Lord Falconberg performed his duties, as M. F. H. at Hawkestone Castle, the —shire hounds never wanted a hundred pounds while he was master of the villa.

We know the communication between Sir Samuel Cripplegate's dressing-room and that of his wife. I once detailed a conversation between the two, another will tend to clear up matters.

'My dear,' and he popped his head into my lady's room after his bath; he was glowing with friction, as is usual after that process. 'My dear, what's to be done about Isabella and that young man?'

'What that painter fellow, Sir Samuel!' and she laughed scornfully, and tossed her back hair, what there was left of her own, rather wildly, 'don't let me hear his name mentioned. I've no opinion of your high art.'

'It's all very well to abuse 'igh art, Lady Cripplegate, but you must hear his name mentioned. We've been playing fast and loose with him, that's about the truth of it. It aint fair upon Bella; and I love Bella better than I hate the painter. He's a good sort o' chap, and he can't help it, I suppose, if Lady Falconberg has got a little boy. It aint his fault.'

'Then it's his misfortune, Sir Samuel; and people must pay for their misfortunes. If you choose to listen to all the cock-and-bull stories of that old idiot Dryden, you may take the consequences. My daughter isn't going to marry a runaway painter, and spend her life knitting stockings and making potato salads. As long as he was Lord Falconberg's heir it was all very well,—now he isn't, why, she won't have him with my consent.'

'Then, my dear, if Bella's anything like yourself I'm half inclined to think she'll have him without. Come, old lady,' and having by this time got into his pantaloons, and appearing with a pair of Mr. Mechi's brushes one in each hand, he put in a very insinuating appearance, 'we encouraged young Falcon, for you know his name's not Fellowes, when we thought he was Lord Falconberg's heir, and now we mustn't throw over Bella. If he isn't the heir, he's next thing to it, and we must be satisfied with that. Lord bless your heart, I shouldn't take too much count of these babbies, they go off like ninepins.

If he's ever Lord Falconberg so much the better for Bella ; we shall not live to see it, I dare say. If he is not, we needn't send our only child abroad to knit stockings or to make potato salad.'

By such arguments as these Lady Cripplegate, having listened to her husband once to do the mischief, was persuaded to undo it to the extent of her power. Young sugar-bakers, tanners, silversmiths, woollen manufacturers, and others went mad when they heard of the sacrifice of so much money to mere affection. One or two electroplated swells at the West End swore at those infernal painting-fellows nowadays, and d—d your literary snobs, who ought not to be admitted into decent society ; but the fact that George Fellowes had stolen away the heart of the old man's daughter was true, and at the end of a given time he married her. Before which time however Lord Falconberg had disposed of the villa at Egmont, and divided his year between Hawkestone Castle and his house in town.

In another year or two Lady Falconberg had put the question of inheritance at rest for some time, unless the house was fated to a repetition of the catastrophe which paved the way for Harold to the title. She had yet another son, and then another, healthy and handsome boys who might look forward in due time themselves to strengthen the antiquity of the family. In the mean time they were to signalise themselves as young England now delights to do, not as their father had done.

Some men may take exception to this. They will run and jump, and be great over flights of hurdles and on the flat for a mile. We old-fashioned fellows left all that at school, and carried none of it to the universities or into our regiment. They will not be quite so good with the gloves as their father was at Eton ; but from what I hear they are less likely to stand in need of the accomplishment. They will grow up in a spirit of what is called muscular Christianity, if you know what that means. It includes much Alpine climbing, which theoretically I know I ought to abuse, but which practically I must admire ; and recommend to be taken under the advice and restrictions of my good and active friend, Alfred Wills, until they have attained his own endurance, self-

reliance, and dexterity. Will they ride steeple-chases like their father? possibly they may, for they will be brought up in the Hawkestone Vale, than which a more tempting line for a four-mile gallop can scarcely be found, even in Leicestershire. Lord Falconberg himself will be satisfied to have them stop here; but they will burn their own fingers before they learn wisdom from others' experience of fire. And all he has to point to is an earldom and their own mother, the most charming woman in England, as the ultimate result of his own follies. He will have to bridge over the gulf which has separated his early struggles from his middle life; and though Lady Falconberg knows it all well, it's a subject never mentioned between them. One thing I'm afraid they may do, which will remind their father's friends of his early career. They may take to betting, the curse of the age; calculated to undo all the good that advanced refinement and modern sciolism is presumed to effect; and they may come out of the dangerous ordeal unscathed; let us hope with all our hearts, that they may. At present they are far from the threshold of these evils. Chubby-faced, handsome children preparing for Eton, the oldest of whom does no discredit to his title, Frederick, Lord Hawkestone, Lord Falconberg's Heir.

THE END.

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